

















ROSALIND MORTON,

—OR—

THE MYSTERY OF IVY CROWN.

A KENTUCKY STORY.

BY MRS. ALICE KATE ROLAND.

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LOUISVILLE, KY.

CHAS. T. DEARING,

1898.

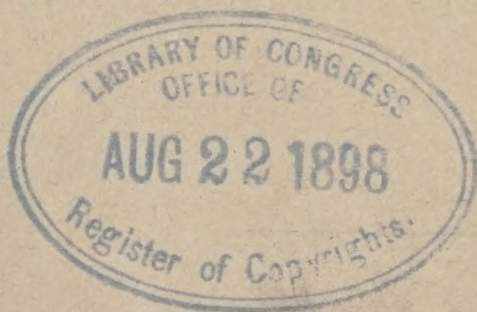


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DEDICATED TO MY DAUGHTER,  
MRS. ANNIE FOOTE.

In the desert a fountain is springing,  
In the wide waste there still is a tree;  
And a bird in the solitude singing,  
Which speaks to my spirit of thee.

A. K. R.







## CHAPTER I.

### ORPHANED.

“The great intelligence fair  
That roam above our mortal state,  
In circle 'round the blessed gate  
Received and gave him welcome there.”

THE sky was overshadowed by dark clouds that hung over the earth like a funeral pall; and the night, coming swiftly on, added new darkness to the almost impenetrable gloom, irradiated only by the jagged whip of lightning that every now and then would rend in twain the black drapery. Then, following rapidly in its wake, would come prolonged peals of thunder, which echoed and re-echoed over the hill-tops and down in the valleys, seeming to shake both earth and heaven with its intensified and deep-voiced mutterings. The wind, too, mourned and wailed piteously, swaying the leafless branches of the forest trees to and fro in wild discordant notes, that now smote upon the ear like harsh whisperings, then melted down into low, sobbing sounds, that told of misery, anguish and desolation. Æolus had indeed upon this night drawn the bolt of his cavern door, and thrown down his sceptre, and the unfettered blast and storm were abroad in the land, holding high carnival, as it were, over the hills and dells, in whose midst nestled the little village of Brookdale. All the combined forces of the elements seemed to have concentrated on this night for the purpose of pouring out their pent-up wrath upon this in-



dividual little place, which, situated as it was, in this remote, unpretentious part of the world, it was strange that even the storm-king should have found it.

But on this tempestuous night, not only had the storm with all its fury laid its hand upon the village, but another hand, more heavy still, had fallen upon it, shrouding it in a gloom as dark as that of the storm-cloud, and that was the hand of death. Scarcely two hours previous to the opening of our story, the Rev. Daniel Morton, the village pastor, an evangelist of the most zealous type, had passed away, and quickly the sad tidings had been borne from house to house until there was not even a little child amongst them who had not heard of the sorrowful event. And while the storm raged without, the good people sat within their humble abodes, with downcast eyes and blanched faces, awed into the most intense silence. Few had ventured out on this terrific night; only those who had officiated in making their pastor ready for the grave having weathered the storm, and now their sacred duty having been performed, these faithful friends sat in meditative solemnity about the little parlor where lay their beloved dead. It was hard for these good people to realize that all that remained to them of this kind friend and teacher, lay there before them, so stark and cold; he who for twenty years had made his home amongst them, dividing his time between them and his other congregations, scattered far and near. Not only had he taught them their duty to man and God, but he had continually let his own light shine in their midst, always cheerful, always happy and resigned; it was no wonder that they



loved him, and were bowed down and grief-stricken that he was no more. For some months past there had been signs of his failing health, but he had continued cheerful and rarely ever complained, hence none of his many friends and followers had been prepared for his sudden demise. Conjestion of the brain had come swiftly and unexpectedly upon him, caused by overwork and a general giving away of his whole constitution.

Such had been the conclusion arrived at by his attending physician, and thus it was after a brief but severe illness, of which, happily, he had been unconscious, his spirit had taken its winged flight. But there was yet another, to whom his loss was far greater still than to those of the villagers, and whose grief was far too deep for pen to describe, and that was his daughter and only child, Rosalind, who, having just entered her seventeenth year, was on the verge of lovely womanhood. When, a few short hours ago, she had seen him, who had filled the place of father, mother, teacher and companion, pass over into the spirit world, with a shriek of anguish, pitiful to hear, she had thrown herself beside him, pleading and praying that he would only look at her, only speak to her once more. But alas! Those dear eyes, so beautiful and expressive in life, were forever closed; those lips that were wont to smile upon her so sweetly and speak to her such kindly and loving words were, alas, silenced in death. And then it was, when she fully realized that he, her only earthly parent, had, indeed, gone beyond recall, there had arisen amid the din and turbulency of the storm such a piteous wail, that the very hardest heart would have



melted at the sound, "Oh, father, father, come back to me! Come back! You were all that I had to love and care for me; and now I am alone, all alone!" And the winds without seemed to take up the mournful cry and echo back the said refrain, Alone, all alone! Then, after the first great outburst had spent itself and the girl lay there, white and motionless, still clasping the stiffening form, loving hands had gently removed her clasp and bore her to her own little room and laid her upon her couch, where she still lay with tearless and wide-open eyes, heeding not the wild strife without, or the strange silence that reigned within, and only conscious of one thing, and that was the terrible calamity which had just befallen her. Death, that grim monster, had visited their happy little home, and borne away her idolized father; and now her heart and life were, indeed, empty. And thus the night wore on, the storm increasing, rather than abating; and while the wind wailed and the thunder rolled like the wheels of many chariots, Martha, the old servant, sat crouched in the chimney corner of her young mistress' room, muttering superstitious legends, of how storms always followed in the wake of a death, when a soul was lost; and how Satan ushered in his new victims with lightning and thunder. But this wicked cant of the negress was apparently unnoticed by the orphan, for too deeply was she engrossed with her sorrow to give heed to anything else; though every little while, when the thunder crashed more loudly and the wind came in more frantic gusts, the old woman would rise up and rush to where Rosalind lay and falling on her knees beside her bed, give vent to her woe-



ful fears, in cries and entreaties. But there came no response of fear from the pale lips, no terrified expression from the blue eyes, that were then fixed in an immovable gaze upon a large portrait of her father, which hung just above her couch, appearing so natural and lifelike, that it seemed to her, should she speak to it, there would surely come a reply. Yes, there he was with his broad, white brow and clear-cut features, every lineament of which bespoke intellect and culture of the highest degree, while over his whole countenance beamed that genial sweet smile so habitual to him.

There was none of that grave solemnity about the face, that supposedly characterizes gentlemen of the cloth, but instead a gleam of merriment seemed to twinkle in his speaking eyes; but above all these psychological tokens, there was none so prominent as strength of will and integrity of character.

Between the father and daughter there had been a most striking resemblance, for the eyes were the same indescribable blue; the same classic brow and well-shaped features, save that Rosalind's were more effeminate, and softened by the fullness of contour, that belongs to youth. Altogether the picture was that of a handsome man, and the girl that gazed upon it, was none the less beautiful; her's, too, was a face of rare intellectual beauty. Long and lingeringly did those sad blue eyes rest upon that loved face, until, at last, through sheer exhaustion, the heavy lids closed over them; but not to sleep, for that was impossible! But to shut out the vision of the pale face, and lifeless form, which had risen between herself



and the portrait. How could it be possible! for one so richly endowed, to be so suddenly robbed of all these senses? How possible to comprehend that all which was left of him was that rigid frame and marble-like face? How could she think of him as having gone out of her life forever, or how cease to listen for his well-known footsteps, and bright cheery voice? And while the lonely orphan put all these queries before her, the weary hours of the night wore away; many of the villagers, as well as herself, keeping the sorrowful vigil. At last the morning dawned, gray and gloomy; the storm had ceased to beat, but the rain still fell in a slow monotonous patter, that only added to the desolateness which had settled upon the village. We will pass briefly over the sad obsequies that attended the dearly loved pastor to the village churchyard. Suffice it to say, that no duty had ever been so sacred, and yet so sad, as laying him away; never had such a hush and solemnity reigned over the village of Brookdale; while, during the performance of the funeral rites, strong men bowed their heads and wept like little children, and women cried aloud, all feeling that their hopes and joys had been blasted, and their light, which had shone so brightly, had indeed been extinguished forever.

A week had passed since the foregoing events, as related, and we find Rosalind, upon this bright winter's morning, sitting alone in the little parlor of the parsonage. Just opposite her stands the empty rocking chair in which her father always sat, and while her eyes rest pathetically upon this reminder of him, she sighs deeply and great



teardrops fall upon the pages of the book that she has been vainly endeavoring to read. It was useless for her to try to put him away from her thoughts, for not only did the chair serve as a reminder of him, but every article in the room; hence nothing could divert her mind to other subjects. But she no longer thought of him with that hopelessness and wild despair that had characterized the first great outburst, but with comparative calmness—a strange peace had settled upon her spirit—“that peace which passes all understanding” had been given her, reconciling and comforting her in her great loss. How often in their many conversations, relating to life and death, in this very little room, he had said to her, “In case of my death, you must not grieve for me, but think of me as having gone on a pleasant journey, and picture me as having entered in at my Father’s house, knowing that my mission here on earth has been fulfilled, and I have been called to my home above. But do not think of me as lost to you here on earth, for though my body be dead, my spirit will still live, and oftentimes be hovering over you, guarding you from evil, therefore be comforted in this thought.”

Such had been his words to her, only a few days before he was smitten down with the fatal attack, and now they came to her like healing balms. But yet she missed him! More especially while sitting there, for there, too, was his Bible and many of his books of reference piled high upon the table, this room having served him as a study also. Here, too, with her, he had read Goethe, Petrarch, and Shakespeare; and together they had studied the works of



Aristotle and other philosophers; for not only did he read and expound the Scriptures, but he loved the classics also, and everything pertaining to high art. For a man, who would have adorned the halls of legislation, and shown with lustrous brilliancy in the senate chamber, to have spent so many years of his life in this small out-of-the-way Kentucky village, had often been a wonder to Rosalind; and though she had learned, from brief mention he had made of his youth, that his family had been wealthy and aristocratic; also, that he had married her dead mother against the will of his father, and thereby been disinherited—beyond this she knew nothing. She believed, however, that why he had chosen this humble lot, had been with him a conscientious duty.

Thus it was, that for twenty years he had devoted himself to the ministry, claiming no creed, but striving, with every effort of his will, to be a faithful follower of Christ. “By the world I am called an evangelist,” he would sometimes say to his hearers, “and that term simply implies a preacher of the gospel, but my chief aim and desire, while here on earth, is to follow the example of Christ; for, like myself, he, too, was a man, who experienced all the temporal wants of man, and bore the many privations consequent to the poor. Therefore, if we wish to be like him we must be zealous in our work, and pray constantly for strength and grace to guide us aright, and keep us humble in the sight of that ever watchful eye, that looks with love and compassion on all who come to him with faith and humility. But do not come as ego-tists and bigots, saying, Lord, I have done this, and I



have done that, in thy name, and now I ask of Thee my reward, for in the words of our Savior he will say unto you, 'Depart from me, I never knew you.' "

And so he had taught throughout the most humble parts of Southern States, holding series of meetings, where bush arbors would be erected and rough seats constructed, for the benefit of the large congregations that would go to hear him. In this way he had spent his days, at least the greatest portion of his mature ones, preaching the doctrine that Christ had taught, and seeking those who were poor and lowly, to impart to them these sacred truths.



## CHAPTER II.

### AUNT VILINDA.

WHILE Rosalind sat thinking of her dead father and his good works, old Marther came in and handed her a letter, saying, "I'se just bin tu de pos office and fotch dis, Miss Rosalin." Rosalind took the letter, and for a few moments studied the old-fashioned chirography of the address, then mechanically opened it, and read:

"ROSALIND MORTON:

DEAR NIECE: I have just heard of the death of your poor father, and write this to say, that as I am about the last of your kinspeople, you had better come to me at once. I am only a poor old woman, and, moreover, an old maid, with no family, but my three cats and poll parrot, but I think we can make you quite comfortable. You are alone, and I am quite sure your poor father has made no provision for you; he never seemed to think it necessary to lay up anything for the future, and spent his life in that pitiful little place, when he might have commanded a large salary somewhere else. But he was a good man, if a foolish one, and I suppose is about as well off now, as he would have been otherwise. Let me hear from you at once, and make up your mind to come to me, for you will find that it will not make you feel any better by continuing on there. I have no more to write you at present. Address your letter to Livingston Post Office, Mor-



ton Place, Ky. And now, niece Rosalind, farewell, and may God be with you, is the prayer of your old aunt,

VILINDA MARMADUKE MORTON."

It was with a heart overflowing with gratitude that Rosalind read this letter, for she realized that after all she was not entirely alone in the world, as one living relative still remained to her, who, in the kindness and generosity of her heart, had offered her a home. How often had she heard her father speak of this maiden aunt, whom she only remembered to have seen when a very small child, and could now recall nothing but a pair of very bright eyes, looking at her through the brightest of gold-rimmed spectacles; yet often had she heard her father descant upon the many good qualities, and laugh over the many eccentricities of his aunt Vilinda; but she was an old maid, and it was no more than natural that she should have her peculiarities. Up to this time, Rosalind had made no decision in regard to the future; in fact she had given herself but little thought, and though these kind-hearted villagers felt that they owed to their pastor a debt of everlasting gratitude, and that his daughter should remain among them as their special charge, Rosalind was far too independent to become a pensioner on their bounty; and though she felt deeply grateful for all their devotion she was nevertheless glad to know that her father's old aunt had claimed her companionship. "I will write at once," she said, speaking more to herself than to old Martha, who stood beside her chair; then, observing the look of inquiry upon the face of the negress,



she added kindly, "This letter is from papa's aunt Vilinda, Martha, she has invited me to come and live with her; she did not mention you, possibly because she did not know that you were still with us, but I will write and ask her if you—" But before Rosalind could finish the sentence, Martha raised her hands deprecatingly, exclaiming, "No, Miss Rosalin, not for de worl would I hab you do dat. Not for de worl," she repeated, "and now I'll tell you why. Well, it is for dis berry reson, Miss Villindy am a old maid, an ebry body sez dat ole maids am right-down terrors. No, I will jis stay on here, and by and by another gud man may com along an take yore par's place, God rest his soul. I does hope he's in heben, but I neber will forgit that storm." And giving her head a doleful shake, the old woman turned to leave the room, when Rosalind's voice arrested her steps. "Stop, Martha," she called, "and listen to me a moment; you have been a very good servant, and because you had been my grandfather's slave, privileged to say and do many things, but you must understand, that while I remain here you must never again refer to that storm in connection with my father's name; it is not the first time that you have spoken in that way, but it must surely be the last." "I didn't mean eny harm, Miss Rosalin, but I cudn't hep tinkin bout dat—" The sentence was never finished, for at this juncture Rosalind had risen, exclaiming passionately, "Hush! this instant; I will not listen to another word, and now leave the room!" Whimpering like a whipped dog the servant obeyed, and again Rosalind was left alone. That this



girl was not altogether of a meek spirit was quite evident, judging by the tone of her voice, and the flashing of her eyes, while reprimanding the old servant, who seemed determined on impressing upon her young mistress that the storm was a bad omen that signified ill to her father's spiritual welfare. Of course, Rosalind attributed these superstitious ideas to the ignorance of the old woman, and knew them to be characteristic of the negro race; but such words, concerning her father, appeared the veriest sacrilege; hence her anger had arisen in his defense. If Rosalind had appeared beautiful, while in the abandonment of her great grief, what term would describe her as she stood there with the full light of the winter's day streaming in upon her, the proud head uplifted, about which was wound the heavy braids of golden-brown hair; the pansy blue eyes wide open, and darkened in shade by the unwonted excitement under which she was laboring; a tint as delicate as a seashell upon her cheek, adding bloom to her transcendental beauty. She was not only lovely, she was divine! For a little while, after the old servant had left her, she stood there trembling with agitation; then she endeavored to calm herself by thinking how foolish it was to allow her feelings to be so wrought up by the words of the simple old soul. How her father would have laughed at such superstitions, as expressed by Martha; and how she, who had resolved within herself to copy his nobleness in every way possible, was giving away to unnecessary anger. Thus reasoning, her usual calmness soon reasserted itself, and again her thoughts reverted to her aunt Vilinda's letter.



In another week's time all her preparations had been completed for her journey, and now that she was about to leave the dear old parsonage that had sheltered her in her infancy, and in which she had grown into lovely womanhood, her heart ached with that great aching void that only an orphan's heart can know; while again and again she wandered about the dear familiar scenes, where together she had so often wandered with her father. The houses of the village were old and weather-beaten, with no signs of modern architecture about them, but they were nevertheless dear to her, for there was not one that had not opened wide its doors to herself and father. And there was the schoolhouse, with its old-fashioned belfry and rusty bell, where he had taught the village school which, alas, looked so lonely and deserted now. And there, too, was the plum orchard that had been so white with blossoms in the spring, and laden with fruit in summer, every tree of which now appeared so dry and lifeless. And the lilac, and snowball, and rosebushes that he had helped her plant out in their pretty little garden, they, too, looked withered and dead. But they would come forth again in all their luxuriant beauty; the plum trees would again be white with fragrant blossoms; the roses, too, would bloom in all their dewy freshness; and the springing verdure again be starred with daisies and buttercups. But never again would he watch with her the resurrection of these rare beauties; never again look upon and enjoy the opening loveliness of spring, he who had loved all these things so much. Yet had he not pointed her to this fact? Impressing upon her that just



so the body, that had laid in the grave, would again burst forth in all its youth and elasticity, and be reunited with the spirit, that never died, to enter into the fullness of its joys. And his spirit would often be hovering near her; this he had repeatedly told her; then why need she grieve to leave the places of their old association and the sacred spot that held all that remained of him, when his body was as inanimate as the casket in which it reposed?

Thus reasoning with herself, she finally gained courage to leave those dearly loved scenes. But, notwithstanding her brave resolution, it was a sad day when she said good-by to the old parsonage and the good people of Brookdale; consequently her tears fell fast, as she shook the hand of many of the old friends, and Martha, who had gathered together at the incommodious little depot to see the last of her. "Be faithful and, like your father, live for Christ," whispered one after another, as they said their farewells; and then she was hurried into the coach, and very soon was whirling along, leaving behind her all that she had ever held dear. She had never been permitted to travel alone before, not even for a short distance, her father having always made it convenient to accompany her; hence she experienced all the loneliness and tediousness of an all-day's journey without a companion. Having ascertained from the depot agent, at Brookdale, that to reach Livingston would only be a day's travel, still the hours would be indeed long, and she wondered inwardly how she would manage to pass them away. By noon the train had reached Bowling Green, and here a great gong was sounding for dinner, where a



twenty minutes' stoppage was made for the benefit of the passengers, many of whom vacated the car for the purpose of dining. This reminded her of her own luncheon that had been prepared for her by kind, loving hands at her old home, and she accordingly took it down and opened it.

When she began to explore the contents of the little basket, she found many tempting viands, such as chicken and tongue, biscuit and cake, and other little delicacies that had been put together for her own individual comfort; and as she took out the food and placed it on the seat beside her, she could imagine the cheery face of her father sitting opposite her. How often had they so dined, when she would accompany him on some of his ministerial rounds, and how vividly did this call to memory those happy, happy days! And again she was with him away among the Kentucky hills, hunting hickory nuts and wild grapes—with which the forest so abounded—and they carried their dinner, and just so it would lay before them, composed of more homely fare, perhaps, which old Martha had prepared for them, and how on these hallowed occasions he would eat with such a relish; all the time amusing her by telling her of the many adventures, and escapades, of his happy youth. And while these visions of the past floated back to her a large lump came in her throat, rendering it impossible for her to swallow the smallest morsel of the apparently palatable little repast. So putting it back in the basket, almost untasted, and choking back the rising tears, she raised the window and looked out. The train had gained many miles while she had indulged



in this sad retrospective view, and was then passing through a beautiful scope of country, and her eyes roved admiringly over its undulating slopes of dark green cedar, its silvery waters and vast woodland solitudes. Far different, indeed, did these scenes appear, with the noonday hush lingering over them, to the dreary, rugged, surroundings of the place she had that day left, perhaps forever, and as she gazed around upon its superior loveliness, she mentally exclaimed, "No wonder that this is called 'God's country,' for surely there is not another such a favored spot on earth." And while she looked upon and admired these new and beautiful scenes, the afternoon wore on until the sun was sinking behind the western hills and the bright, crisp day was dying; then the train drew up to a neat little station, the brakeman opened the door and announced "Livingston," and Rosalind knew that her place of destination had been reached.

It was with emotions of mingled hopes and fears, consequent to the young and timid, that Rosalind alighted from the coach and looked around her; but seeing no one except the station agent, she was just about to conclude that her aunt had not received her letter announcing when she would arrive, when a voice from the rear of the platform asked, "Is dis Miss Rosalin Motin?" Rosalind turned around quickly and saw an old negro standing there, doffing his hat, who continued, "I'se old Peter, Miss Vilindy Motin's old sarvant, and she sont me to foch her niece, Miss Rosalin Motin." "Yes, I am Rosalind Morton, Uncle Peter, and was expecting some one to meet me from Morton Place," replied the girl, nodding



and smiling pleasantly. "Glad to see yer Miss Rosalin," rejoined the old man with another profound bow, "and now I'll go fetch the carriage round; you see Miss Rosalin, dem dar critters of ole Miss's am so darnation skit-tish of dem dar keers, that I'm obliged to leave dem a pretty considerable distance off," said the old man, walking briskly away. Rosalind looked after him curiously, thinking him the queerest looking specimen she had ever seen of the negro race; his face being so intensely black, and his head as white as cotton, making him appear an oddity indeed. And while she watched him driving up the beautiful span of greys, behind which came the creaky old carriage, she could not decide within her own mind which of the two appeared the most primitive—Peter or the coach.

"How far is it to Morton Place?" she inquired as the greys bent their proud necks and, impatient from their long delay, started off at a brisk trot. Their speed was, however, instantly checked by Peter pulling vigorously at the lines and calling out loudly, "Whoa! Whoa!" Then again raising his hat and turning toward Rosalind, he said, "Beg parden, Miss Rosalin, but I did not pre-sactly understood you; you sees, Miss Rosalin, I'se mighty deaf, and you'l hev tu spoke a little louder," he added, holding his hand up to his ear impressively. Rosalind repeated the question in a much louder tone, which elicited a ready reply. "Its nigh on tu tree miles, Miss Rosalin, but we kin mek de trip all right afore dark." The girl would have asked after her aunt's health, but under the circumstances of Uncle Peter's deafness, refrained



from questioning him farther, so she settled herself comfortably back against the threadbare cushions, and looked out upon the passing scenery, that appeared like a panorama before her. And then it was she beheld with admiration the loveliest part of the country through which she had yet passed. The great stretches of woodland were entirely divested of their clothing, which enabled her to have a full view of the magnificent bluegrass region for miles around. There were many handsome buildings thereabouts with pretty grounds attached, but chief among them, arose before her, by far the most beautiful old place belonging to this, the garden spot of Kentucky; and while she gazed in rapt admiration upon it, an exclamation of delight burst from her. It was no wonder that she was charmed into ecstasy with the sight of it, for none, not even the most critical or fastidious of the things pertaining to art and nature, could have looked upon this scene without admiring. The house, a grand old structure, was composed of dark stone, with high roof and turret, about which great masses of ivy had twined and intertwined, until the walls were almost entirely covered, giving to it the appearance of a great, green crown. This elegant old mansion with its ivy crowned tower, situated as it were, on the broad plateau of a hill and surrounded by the most lovely grounds, was indeed a grand combination of art and natural beauty. About the grounds were many trees, mostly evergreens, consisting of cedar, pine, juniper and cypress, while here and there were dense patches of box and arborvitae, thus making a canopy of the most varied shades of green, and imparting to the scene the glow



and warmth of sunnier climes, where winter is unknown. There were broad drives, and circular paths winding about the grounds; and scattered promiscuously about were the most charming little summer-houses and vine-clad arbors. An avenue of pines led up to the front of the mansion, met by a broad terrace which was composed of dark stone corresponding in hue to the building. A large fountain marked the center of the parterre, while to the left and situated some distance from this, was another fountain and grotto of still more remarkable beauty.

But the most attractive feature of all was the statuary, grouped about in the most picturesque manner, some of which were nymphs in flowing garments, thus imparting to the scene a festive character. It would, however, be impossible to do full justice in describing such a place, for only those who suddenly come face to face with such beauty can comprehend and appreciate it. Hence to the beholder this view was exceedingly delightful. Nothing escaped her enrapt gaze, not even the gate that opened upon the broad drive was lost upon her, which was in itself a masterpiece of workmanship, and appeared to Rosalind grand and imposing, with its dark, stately columns and delicate ironwork, contrasting strongly with the deep green of the trees. Uncle Peter had not failed to see the effect this scene had produced upon his young charge, and had pulled up the greys to a slow walk while they were passing, thus giving Rosalind an opportunity to look her heart's content at the old ivy-crowned mansion with its lovely grounds. And not until the carriage had passed, and it was almost lost to view in the approaching twilight,



did he interrupt her, then he turned around, saying, "I seed yu lookin ober dar at dat fine ole place, Miss Rosalin! Well, dat am de propety of Jedge Underood, and dey calls hit Ivy Crown, but hits shot up now, fur you sees dey am folks what takes thar own plesur, spens thar winters in de South and comes thar in de warm wether, and brings such loads of compny wid dem. Yes sarree! dey am de grandees of dis remunity, I can tell you! Old Miss is indepentent like, and dont ax dem eny odds, but if she wants eny advis of eny kind, she alays axes de Jedge fur hit."

Rosalind listened to Uncle Peter's talk concerning the owners of the grand old country seat and felt her interest quicken in regard to them, and wondered inwardly, how any one could leave such a lovely old home in search of pleasures elsewhere. "Ivy Crown, Ivy Crown," she kept on repeating over and over again, thinking it such a pretty and appropriate name for the old ivy-crowned structure on the hill. She was thus thinking and cogitating within her own mind when old Peter declared his intention of stopping by pulling up the greys and calling out loudly, "Whoa! Whoa!" then jumping briskly to the ground he opened the door of the carriage and said, "Here we are tu hum, Miss Rosalin."

It was almost dark, but upon alighting from the vehicle Rosalind could discern through the gloaming a moderately large house composed of red brick, with a massive portico in front, about which clambered a net work of vines. A smooth, green yard, with a good many tall shade trees, and a broad gravel walk that led up to the



front entrance. A couple of New Foundland dogs roused up and barked lazily as they approached, then recognizing Peter, ran out to meet them, followed by an old woman. Her movements were quick and elastic and her voice, though a little tremulous, was not discordant, having none of that rasping sound that frequently accompanies old age, and fell pleasantly on the ear of the young girl while she said, "Rosalind Morton, I bid you welcome!" She held out a little withered hand and taking within it the soft white palm of her grandniece, gave it a hearty shake, and still holding it led the way into the house. "Bless me, child, how cold your hands are! but come along right to my room and get yourself warm before supper," she continued, hurrying Rosalind into a cozy looking apartment where a bright wood fire was diffusing a cheerful warmth and glow in its every nook and corner, bringing out into the very best effect possible, its plain but scrupulously neat appearance. Rosalind took in everything rapidly, not failing to note the resemblance of the room to the dress and manners of her relative; truly it was characteristic of its owner. While the girl stood there, with the soft glow of the firelight shining on her gold brown hair, and lingering lovingly upon the white brow and into the depths of the blue orbs, she was indeed fair to look upon, and the old aunt was at once cognizant of the fact that Daniel Morton's daughter was a beauty, and moreover had the stamp of intellect of a high order engraven upon her noble brow. But she did not tell Rosalind her thoughts in words, and only by the pleasant look that came into her eyes while she stood



regarding her was the girl made aware of the fact that her aunt was pleased with her appearance. "La, me, how you have grown since I last saw you," the old woman continued, without waiting for an answer to the several questions she had already put to her grandniece, regarding her health, her trip, etc. But the orphan was too glad to be spared the pain of speaking, for tears were choking her utterance and it was all she could do to keep them from flowing. She longed to throw her arms about this dear old aunt and tell her how grateful she felt for all of her kindness in giving her a home, and ask her to take her at once into her affections. But there was a certain matter-of-fact way about her newly found relative which told her that such would appear to the old lady foolish and sentimental, and altogether unnecessary. Hence she kept very quiet, and was apparently composed. "I shouldn't wonder if you are a little hungry after being all day on the cars, and while you get yourself warm I'll go and see about supper," said the aunt, after standing by the lovely girl for a few moments, regarding her admiringly. "I'm not at all hungry, Aunt Vilinda, so do not hurry supper on my account," said Rosalind, looking wishfully at her, as much as to say, "I had a great deal rather you would smooth my hair, and bestow upon me a few caresses, than to place me before a feast fit for the gods." But the aunt did not appear to interpret her niece's expression; instead, however, she came a little nearer, and holding up her hand to her ear, said, "You will have to speak a little louder to me, Rosalind, and I might as well tell you now, that I am mighty deaf."



Rosalind could not refrain from smiling upon receiving this intelligence, for those had been Uncle Peter's words also, and she wondered secretly if the remaining portion of the family shared the same fate. "Yes," continued the old aunt, "we are a strange family; I am deaf, Peter's deaf, and Marietta cant hear the best in the world, so you see you will have to speak loud to all of us." Then she hurried out of the room. "I'm deaf, Peter's deaf, all deaf, ha, ha, ha, ha," shrieked a voice somewhere in the room, upon which Rosalind started up in alarm and looked around to see from whence the sound proceeded, but seeing nothing that could possibly possess a voice, she was greatly tempted to try to find her way to the kitchen, when happily the aunt returned. "If you are about warm enough, we will go into the dining room," she said, "but what's the matter, child? You are as white as a ghost!"

Rosalind drew nearer for the purpose of telling her of the strange voice she had heard, but before she could form a syllable, again there sounded in her ears the same words, if possible, shriller than before, "All deaf, all deaf, ha, ha, ha, ha," then the cry sank down into a low, cluckling sound, which was repeated over and over again.

Rosalind shivered with fright, and drew still nearer to the old lady, who said, soothingly, "Don't be alarmed, child, it is only my poll parrot. She is always ready to repeat everything she hears, and to laugh over our misfortunes; a great bird she is, to be sure!" "What a goose I am," said Rosalind, trying to laugh off the feeling of fear which had almost overcome her. And then



she thought how her father would have enjoyed the joke, and teased, and laughed at her. Thinking in this wise, she brightened up, and assured her aunt she was entirely ready for supper. On their way to the dining room she discovered Polly, who had perched herself within the window, behind the curtain. She stopped beside the bird a moment, and smoothed her bright plumage, and praised her talkative qualities. "Yes, she is a fine bird, a very fine bird," said Miss Morton, senior, "and I have had large sums offered me for her, but no money would buy her; no, Niece Rosalind, nothing but death will ever part I and Polly." Then, shaking her finger at the bird, she said, "Polly must eat her supper now; it's Polly's bedtime; pretty Polly must go to bed." Polly remained silent until she was left alone, but by the time the two were seated at the table, she was heard to cry out, "Rosa must eat her supper now, and go to bed; pretty Rosa, my pretty red Rosa," the bird ended by singing out lustily.

It was too funny to hear the parrot calling her name, and associating it with the song of "My pretty red rose," and Rosalind broke into peal after peal of merry laughter. She had seen parrots before, and heard them speak, but always disconnectedly, and to hear this bird speak so readily and wittily, it was, indeed, wonderful.

The girl's laugh rang out cheerily, sounding and resounding throughout the old house, seeming to awake dead and gone echos of the past. It was like the chimes of silvery bells upon the ear of the old aunt, whose thin, colorless lips parted in a genial smile.

"I am glad Polly amuses you so much; she is always



in good spirits, and you will find her lively company," she said.

Then the old lady touched a small silver bell, which was immediately answered by an old negress, who appeared, bearing a large tray, containing the supper, consisting of white rolls, cold ham, delicious butter, preserves, and fragrant tea, which, placed upon the snowy-white tablecloth, made it appear more appetizing still.

The dining room, too, was the perfection of neatness, but old-fashioned in its furnishing; from the sideboard, and high-backed chairs, to the pretty china teacups, flowered with sprigs of heliotrope, everything betokened a primitive age. Rosalind did not fail to observe the perfect neatness of everything, and moreover had the opportunity of observing more closely the face of her father's maiden aunt.

Miss Vilinda Morton had never been beautiful, but in her the ideal, respectable, and high-minded woman was fully realized. Her whole life had been a succession of good and virtuous actions, and this straightforwardness, which had characterized her, had given to her face a calm, self-possessed expression, that nothing else but a soul at peace could lend to a countenance. Her extreme leanness did not admit of wrinkles, and, as she grew older, gave to her face a pallor and transparency which made her appear more saint than virgin. But the most striking feature were her eyes, which were large and grey, and behind the gold spectacles, shone brightly.

The face was full of interest to Rosalind, and though there was much reserve of manner about her, the lonely



girl felt her heart going out towards the old aunt, and with this came a new feeling of content, to which she had been a stranger since she had lost her father, and she breathed a prayer of thankfulness, that her footsteps had been guided towards this dear haven, wherein she had been so kindly received.



## CHAPTER III.

### DOMESTICATED.

“From the meadow your walks have left so sweet,  
That whenever a March wind sighs,  
He sets the jewel print of your feet  
In violets blue as your eyes,  
To the woody hollows in which we meet,  
And the valleys of paradise.”

TWO months had passed since Rosalind Morton had found herself installed in her new home, and though there had been some days that were fraught with sadness, she had not been altogether unhappy.

During this time she had learned to do many useful things which had heretofore been left out of her education; books, music and drawing had been her pastime while under her father's guardianship; but Aunt Vilinda had taught her how to knit and crochet, and sew upon plain garments, until she was becoming quite proficient in these useful occupations, while all the time these lessons were going on, she would talk to her about her father, expatiating greatly upon his gallantry, high moral character, and unrivaled intellect. “He was a man to be proud of, and one that had many friends, but as I said in my letter to you, he was very foolish for wasting his talents in that sleepy little town when he might have held one of the highest positions of the land.



“My brother educated him for the purpose of making him a great man, but much to his disappointment he chose the ministry.”

“He was a great man; and, better than being great, he was a good man, and there are few like him,” Rosalind had answered rather warmly at a time when one of these conversations was in progress, and the aunt replied, “Yes, a good man, truly, but could he not have worked for the good of his country in the legislature, or in the senate chamber as well? Heaven knows we need good men there worse than anywhere else.” “But papa was not ambitious, and did not care to hold such offices; he believed in being humble in his way of living, and followed the example of Christ. Oh, Aunt Vilinda! if you could have heard him preaching to the great multitudes of the poorer classes, you would not have wished him a higher lot, he looked so grand and noble as he stood before them, while his face beamed upon them like the sun. And the hardest sinner would turn from evil ways after hearing him.” “But, my dear child, he sacrificed himself in this way, broke himself completely down by his zealous work; and when he should have been in the very prime of health and vigor, was only a physical wreck. I know he thought he was only fulfilling his duty to God and his fellow-man, and though the cause was a great one, he ought not to have forgotten himself so completely; but he did not live in reality, but in the clouds, and I doubt very much if he knew when his body was suffering.” “I agree with you there, Aunt Vilinda, for I have often found him feverish, and his throat swollen and inflamed, after holding these



series of meetings, of which he seemed entirely unaware," replied the girl, sadly.

And thus it was that Rosalind heard much sound philosophy from the old lady, and though her plain manner of speaking would sometimes jar upon the nerves of the sensitive girl, she nevertheless was compelled within her own mind, to admit the truth of her sensible logic, and be governed, also, by her opinions in many things.

But though she sincerely regretted that her father had perhaps hastened his death by neglecting his physical comfort and health, still there was great consolation in the thought that he had lived so on earth as to be worthy of a crown of immortality.

Day by day did the common interest of these two increase; and, though they were so entirely dissimilar in everything, a tie of sympathy seemed to have united them from the first.

It was true that Aunt Vilinda was never demonstrative with her affections, save towards her cats and Polly, but if Rosalind did not share in this petting, she knew intuitively that within the true heart of the dear old woman had sprung up a warm love for her, which each day was ripening. Thus had the two, who had been so entirely alone, become necessary to each other. So the days had glided pleasantly by, and winter was fast disappearing.

During this time, Rosalind had asked many questions about the beautiful old place, of which she had had a view on her way from the depot to Morton Place, and Ivy Crown had become a household word with them. Miss



Vilinda having taken pains to answer all her questions, besides had given her a sketch of its owners.

“They are fine people, and the very top of society; but Henrietta, the eldest of the two girls, is a little too proud; not a bit like Camille, who is a nice, friendly girl, as one would wish to see; and a little beauty, too, I can tell you,” she said one day to Rosalind, when their talk had drifted in that direction.

“Is Mrs. Underwood living?” was the question that followed this mention of the girls.

“No; she died when the youngest child, Fred, was born; but old lady Underwood took her place, and has been a mother as well as grandmother to the children; she is a good woman, and everybody likes her, and the Judge, too,—everybody but those who are jealous of them, and that is not a few. Mrs. Wilkerson, who lives joining farms with them, don’t like any of the Underwoods, because they are educated, fine people, and hold their heads high, and have grand folks there in the summer. But there were never better or kinder people living than they are.”

One afternoon, about the middle of March, Rosalind had completed her task and gone into the old-fashioned parlor to practice her music; the piano, too, was old-fashioned, and corresponded in appearance with the other appurtenances of the room; but everything, from the large, old sofa, to the antiquated volumes on the center table, were arranged with the most perfect order; and over the whole room such entire neatness prevailed that it was by no means unattractive.



The piano stood alongside one of the windows, which Rosalind immediately raised, letting in a draught of fresh, cool air, and a flood of golden sunlight; then she turned over the music in search of something familiar.

At last her search was rewarded by finding the old Scottish ballad, "Annie Laurie," with which every one is acquainted; and in her clear, sweet voice she sang, playing the accompaniment.

She was alone, and feeling no restraint, had, as it were, thrown her whole soul into the song.

Higher and higher her voice soared, as she carolled forth in richest melody the sweet old air. Suddenly the dogs rushed out, barking loudly, and Rosalind was made aware that some one was passing. In a moment the song had ceased, and looking out of the window she saw a gentleman riding by. That he was handsome, young, and well dressed, she saw at a glance; also that the beautiful horse upon which he was mounted was going at a slow gait, and he was looking towards the window. A bright flush mounted to her face, and her eyes dropped upon the keys. Whoever he was, he had heard her singing, and she felt mortified and ashamed to think that she was making such a loud noise and the stranger had heard her. She then closed the piano, and tried to divert her thoughts by taking a more critical survey of the room. From the faded figures of the carpet her eyes wandered to the mantel, upon which were a pair of tall glass candlesticks and a plaster-of-paris image of Samuel kneeling in an attitude of prayer, while just above this saintly little form hung the portrait of a young woman,



perhaps about twenty years of age. The face was not beautiful, but delicate, and of an intellectual cast. On the opposite side, and hanging on a level with this one, was a picture of a young man. His complexion was dark, and his face wore a pleasant expression; but it was not of the high-bred cast, as that of the lady's. The high standing collar and odd-looking tie betokened him as belonging to two generations back. Rosalind had never observed these pictures before; in fact, she had only visited this room on the several occasions of practicing her music.

While she sat there contemplating as to who could have been the gentleman whose portrait hung alongside of her Aunt Vilinda's (for she had recognized it), the door opened and her aunt came in.

"Have you finished your practice?" she asked, advancing into the room.

"Yes, Aunt Vilinda; I have played as long as I wish to-day; would continue for your benefit, but am sadly out of tune," she added, sweetly.

"Very well, niece; the old piano is sadly out of tune, too; and I am not feeling well about my head; I believe my neuralgia is coming on again."

"I am very sorry you are not feeling well, Auntie; hadn't we better go back to the fire, for fear of you taking more cold? But before we go, please tell me whose portrait is that beside your own. I would have known yours anywhere; it is so like you still; but the other one is not that of a Morton," said the girl, interrogatively.

For a few moments the old aunt stood there mutely



looking into the face of her niece; then, while a little flush of color came into her white cheeks, she said, "That is the portrait of the man to whom I was engaged to be married. Of course you would like to know why the marriage did not take place, and I will tell you. It was for this reason: he died." Rosalind saw the pale lips quiver, and a moisture come into the eyes of her old relative, and felt sorry that she had questioned her, feeling assured that by so doing she had called up sad recollections. "Forgive me, Aunt Vilinda; I did not know that my words would cause you to feel badly," the girl said coaxingly, to which the old woman replied: "Don't worry, child; there is no harm done. It is now fifty years since he died, and I have had plenty of time to get over it." That night after Rosalind had gone to her own little room, she sat before the cheerful wood fire thinking of the old aunt, the romance of her youth, and the death of her betrothed husband, and the problem was solved why she had lived all these years alone. Her faithful heart had clung to her first and only love. Truly, such a woman should be honored and esteemed by every one. And yet, as a general thing, the so-termed old maids are denounced and considered the most disagreeable of womankind, it being generally supposed that they become spinsters through necessity rather than choice. But such is a mistaken idea, and when one becomes associated with them and gets a glimpse into their inner lives, they are found to possess many qualities far superior to those who have assumed the conjugal state. However ill-timed this digression may appear to my readers—who are, per-



haps, more interested in the heroine than the maiden aunt—it does not go amiss to add this encomium in behalf of this misunderstood, and—it may be added—much abused, class of feminines known as old maids. The weather continued to grow milder as the month advanced, and no one would have thought of it as March—supposed to be the most disagreeable of the twelve. Rosalind was pining for a long walk, but, up to this time, had not ventured beyond the woods belonging to Morton Place.

“It is just too lovely to stay in doors,” she soliloquized, as she gazed over the broad fields of bluegrass, which, in delicate colors, was just springing into life. So, upon one of these pleasant, sunny days, she found her aunt superintending the planting of some early vegetables, and, after lingering beside her a few moments, said: “If you have no objection, Aunt Vilinda, I would like to go for a nice, long walk.” And the aunt replied: “Very well, child; but mind and don’t wander too far, as there are many roads and by-paths about the woods, and there is danger of you losing your way.” “Never fear, Aunt; I promise not to get lost,” Rosalind returned, gayly, as she stepped lightly down the walk and entered the path that led to the woods. That happy forgetfulness—the young alone experience—steals over her as she speeds along, while snatches of song, every now and then, rose to her lips. Leaving the valley, she began to ascend the hill that lay before her, the summit of which commanded a fine view of the surrounding country; the chief desire of her heart, however, was to again look upon the lovely old place known as Ivy Crown. At last the point



was reached from which she could gaze down upon this ideal home, and, exhausted and almost breathless, she leaned against a tree and feasted her eyes on its rare and magnificent beauties. Yes, there it lay before her, all bathed in the brilliant sunlight, the cedars and other evergreen trees spreading their boughs over the marble deities whose fantastic shapes shone out, dazzlingly white, in the clear light; and there, too, were the fountains and grottos, and the dark-green sheen of ivy, covering the walls and crowning the turret of the old stone mansion.

So fascinating did the scene appear, with the landscape stretching beyond it with no intervening haze, but vivid and distinct, and yet aerial in hue, that Rosalind stood entranced, forgetful of where she was. "It is all so beautiful that it hardly seems real," she exclaimed, enthusiastically, "and I will have to get nearer to convince myself that my sight is not deceiving me," she added, continuing her walk in that direction. Thus it was, that in a very short time she stood at the gate which opened upon the drive that led up to the front of the building, and, finding it partly open, she could not resist the temptation of entering. Having ventured thus far, she saw no reason why she should not go within, and by this means get a better view of its rare embellishments. A few moments later she stood face to face with the bewitching interior.

And there were no longer any doubts as to the reality of its existence, for so close was she to the house that her hand rested caressingly amid the network of ivy which clung so tenaciously to its venerable walls, and



crowned its tower in wreaths of shining green. And there, too, were the fountains, with their water nymphs about them; and the summer-houses, and rustic bowers, of such quaint and unique designs, and the lovely trees of evergreens; yes, there was everything just as beautiful as it had appeared to her from the old rickety carriage on the day of her arrival, and from the hilltop a little while ago. So enthused was she, while wandering from beauty to beauty, inspecting every mythical and curious design, that until her curiosity was satisfied she had experienced no fatigue; then her weariness became so apparent that she felt obliged to sit down and rest a little while, before returning to Morton Place; suiting the action to the thought, she at once sought out a little vine-sheltered bower, and seating herself upon the rustic seat within, she commenced to indulge in a most interesting day-dream. From Ivy Crown, Rosalind's thoughts roved to those favored ones of fortune who called it their home; and she pictured to herself the stately Judge, and his two daughters: Henrietta, the dark, proud beauty, and Camille—whom her aunt had told her was called Millie by the family—so fair and lovely; and in her fancy she could see them, in this their beautiful home, surrounded by their many friends, while in the midst of their social gatherings was the white-haired grandmother and their two brothers. “How happy ought they to be with such a home and so many to love them,” she thought, while comparing her own lonely lot with those fortunate girls; “but I should not murmur or complain, for God has been very good to me.” Thus she was thinking and so-



liloquizing, when her attention was suddenly arrested by a slight noise, as if some one was cautiously approaching. Rosalind arose and looked anxiously around, but could perceive no one, and was about to conclude that her imagination was playing her false, when through the thick vines of honeysuckle that climbed about the lattice bower she caught sight of a face peering at her—a face that caused her heart to stand still, and her whole frame to shake convulsively; then a long, claw-like hand reached within, parting the vines, and the girl realized with horror the near approach of the most uncanny-looking creature that in all her life she had ever beheld; a face fearful in its imbecility, and yet so drawn and haggard as to awaken pity; the hair unkempt and disheveled, streamed about the shoulders; the eyes set in deep sockets and resting with an expressionless glare upon the face of the fair young girl. The wide mouth was sufficiently open to disclose the red, swollen gums, from which two or three long teeth protruded, giving the whole countenance a most ferocious expression. The garb of this most extraordinary creature was composed of some heavy, coarse material, which hung loosely about the form. Upon seeing Rosalind, it had given utterance to a whimpering sound, followed by the most incoherent gibberish. For a few moments following the appearance of this frightful apparition, Rosalind was incapable of moving from the spot; but when it came close to her, and commenced plucking at her dress, with superhuman strength she tore herself away from the grasp of the skeleton-like hands, and with the fleetness of a deer fled from the grounds.



For some time after reaching the exterior she hastened onward, fearing to stop a moment or look back; for it seemed to her that this fearful mystery was closely pursuing her. While going at this rapid rate she ran with sudden force against some impeding object; and to her astonishment and dismay, she found, upon looking up, that this object was nothing more, or less, than a man. That he was also young and handsome, and wore a hunting suit, she perceived at a glance; but not having recovered herself sufficiently to speak, stood there in dumb amaze. The gentleman, as much surprised as herself by this sudden collision, was the first to break the silence, by saying, in a pleasant voice, "I sincerely beg pardon, miss! I did not see you in time to get out of your way; however, I trust there is no harm done, or any bones broken," he added, smilingly.

Rosalind, somewhat reassured by his kind manner and pleasant speech, tried to explain to him that 'twas she who owed the apology, instead of himself, but added, "I was so frightened that I was hardly conscious of anything." "Indeed! and what was it, may I ask, that so frightened you?" "Oh, it was something; but I do not know what," she went on, pantingly. "I was going for a long walk, and passing Ivy Crown, I saw the gate open, and went in the grounds, to have a look around, and it was while there that I became so frightened that I almost lost my senses; and this is why I was running so fast when I met you." "Pardon me," he said, "but you have not explained to me what it was that caused your fright!" "Well, I will try to do so now; as I said be-



fore, I went in the grounds, and after I had spent some little time in looking around, I sat down to rest in one of the pretty vine arbors, when there appeared to me the most hideous looking object I ever saw in all my life."

Before Rosalind could utter another sentence, the young man interrupted her by asking, excitedly, "What was this object like; will you tell me? My name is Underwood, and Ivy Crown is my home; hence, it is my duty to find out who has dared frighten a lady while in those grounds."

Upon hearing this, Rosalind became greatly embarrassed, and for some moments could not command her voice, for she felt that she, too, had been intruding; but as the silence was becoming still more embarrassing, she at last summoned courage to say, "It was very wrong in me to have gone into the grounds, and to you it must appear like I was trespassing; but I trust that you will forgive me this time, and I will promise never to repeat the offense." And while she spoke an expression of sincere contrition came into her face, making it appear even more interesting than before, and the gentleman could not repress a good-natured smile upon observing it.

"There is no apology needed, I can assure you, as Ivy Crown is always at the disposal of neighbors and friends," he said, kindly; "but I am anxious to know the intruder that gave you such a fright, and also the name of the lady who has honored Ivy Crown with a visit, notwithstanding it was a chance one," he continued, still regarding the girl attentively. "Certainly," replied Rosalind, "I should have thought of that sooner;



my name is Morton, and at present I am residing at Morton Place.” Then Rosalind went on to explain how, from her aunt’s carriage, she had first seen Ivy Crown, and how, since her stay at Morton Place, she had so longed to look again upon its grand beauties; furthermore, how, on this day, she had determined upon getting a closer view of it, and had accordingly gone nearer and nearer, until she had found herself at the gate, and, without stopping to think, had ventured in. “But, the hideous creature, how shall I describe it, with its unkept person and imbecile expression—oh! it was horrible! indeed horrible! and I cannot find words with which to describe it,” she said, with a shudder, too intent with her subject to observe the sudden pallor that overspread the face of her auditor. But, without any further betrayal of emotion, he replied: “I am, indeed, happy to welcome you to the neighborhood, Miss Morton, and though I sincerely regret the unfortunate occurrence of this afternoon, I am nevertheless proud to know you so much admire my old home.” Rosalind was silent, and, after a short pause, the young man continued: “And now I think I can unravel the mystery of the strange visitation you have just described. There are rumors afloat of such a creature having been seen of late by different persons in this neighborhood, rambling about in a demented state; and, following close upon these rumors, comes a report of an escaped lunatic, from Anchorage Asylum, whom doubtless are one and the same, who, finding the gate open, wandered into the grounds. And now, Miss Morton, with your permission, I will act as your guide to Morton



Place, since you have come at least half a mile out of your way."

Rosalind thanked him warmly, and the two proceeded toward her home. During their walk they talked on different subjects, and, while drifting from theme to theme, he said: "I only arrived here a few days since, having been absent for more than three years; but, unlike the prodigal son of old, there was no fatted calf slain, or rejoicing of any kind in honor of my homecoming. On the contrary, I found a darkened house, and not a white soul on the place to receive me. But, it was nothing more than I expected, coming home at this early season."

By this time they had about reached Morton Place, and, on bidding her good-bye, he said: "My sisters will return the latter part of April, and will be glad to enliven your stay at Morton Place; and I trust you will forget the circumstance of this afternoon and enjoy your visits to Ivy Crown—but I am detaining you, so I will again say good-bye." Lifting his hat in a most gallant manner, he turned about and retraced his steps toward his home.



## CHAPTER IV.

### IVY CROWN REOPENED.

“Here are cool mosses deep,  
And thro’ the moss the ivies creep ;  
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,  
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.”

AS Rosalind’s escort strode leisurely up the road, she could not resist lingering at the gate and watching him, for in the grand form, and easy, graceful carriage, she recognized him as the true scion of a noble race ; and into her blue eyes there was an expression of deepest admiration. It was twilight when she entered the house, and Marietta was lighting the lamps. “How long I have been absent,” she mused, as she noted the lateness of the hour. Then her Aunt Valinda came forward to meet her, saying, excitedly, “Rosalind ; is it you, child? I have been so uneasy about you that I sent Peter to hunt you up, fearing that you had lost your way. Where in the world have you been this whole blessed afternoon?” Dropping into the first chair she came to, Rosalind replied, wearily, “Yes, aunt ; I am thankful to say that I am safe at home once more ; but having walked a great deal farther than I intended, I am completely tired out ; and, auntie, I trust you will not get angry with me when I tell you where I have been ; promise me that you will not, Aunt Vilinda,” she continued, pleadingly.

“Go on, child, and tell me. I am not cross with you



often, am I? So I don't see why you should speak that way." "No, Aunt Vilinda, you are always kind; but I feel that I should not have gone where I did this afternoon, and that is why I asked you not to get angry; but I will tell you without further ceremony. I went to Ivy Crown." "What! alone?" exclaimed the old lady, in a tone of consternation. "Yes, Aunt Vilinda, alone; I know I should not have done so; but the place looked so lovely that I could not resist going nearer, after having had a view of it from the hill; so I went on, and on, until I found myself at the gate of the front entrance, and thinking that as none of the family were at home there would be no harm in going in, I accordingly did so."

While Rosalind was speaking, Miss Morton, senior, stood regarding her almost sternly; and when she raised her hands as if about to expostulate, Rosalind interrupted her: "Please, Aunt Vilinda, let me tell you what I saw, and how frightened I became while there, and then you can give me my scolding all at once." Then Rosalind told her all about how delighted she had been with everything, and how, after roving the grounds over, she had sat down to rest, and how the frightful, crazed creature had appeared to her while sitting there; and lastly, with crimson cheeks and downcast eyes, how in her wild flight she had ran against a gentleman, who had informed her that he was a son of Judge Underwood, and kindly escorted her to Morton Place. The aunt did not again interrupt her while she was relating the happenings of this eventful afternoon; but when Rosalind had finished speaking, she said, "I did not know you had the least



thought of going that far from the house; if I had, I should have made Peter drive you over; however, I hope you will not expose yourself again to such dangers by going to a strange place alone. As to the crazy creature that you saw in the grounds of Ivy Crown, I have no idea who it is, but you are not the only one who has seen it about that place, and it is a mystery that no one has ever been able to solve. Some of the neighbors have seen it, and the negroes who work on the farm have seen it, and so has Peter, but the Underwoods deny all knowledge of its existence; so it has got to be called a spirit or a ghost, or something supernatural; but in my opinion it is flesh and blood, and that of a dangerous kind, for Peter says its finger nails are half as long as its fingers. I never was certain before that it had been seen, and thought it a hobgoblin tale that had gotten out through the negroes, and had been exaggerated until people had become to imagine it a truth; but now I am convinced of its existence."

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by Polly, who declaimed loudly that she wanted her supper.

The spring advanced rapidly, and, while the other hands were planting the corn and attending to the farm work, Marietta and Peter were busily employed making the garden. During this time Miss Vilinda and Rosalind found much to employ them by superintending this work. One day while thus engaged, the aunt complained of neuralgia, upon which Rosalind insisted on her going in the house, and allowing her to remain. For some little while she watched Peter make the bean hills, and



sorted out the variety her aunt had instructed to have planted; then old Peter called her attention, "Dem am de crowders, Miss Rosalin ; de berry best garden bean dat is raised. Dey's intended fo de cornfiel, but I plants dem here where de early corn am planted fo roasting yers. You see the corn am already sprouted afore we plant de beans."

This was not the first lesson Rosalind had received in the art of gardening, and Uncle Peter's instructions bring vividly to mind the last time she and her father had planted their garden while at Brookdale; how they had planted gourd seed instead of cucumbers, and how, upon finding out their mistake, they had laughed over it, and to think only one year had passed since then; but alas, how many had been the changes within herself since that time. She was then a child, happy and joyous as the days were long. Now she was a child no longer, but a woman, who had learned the meaning of bitterness and sorrow. She was thinking sadly of this, when Marietta's voice roused her from her revery. "If you please, Miss Rosalin, I will be obleged tu you fur some mor ob dem butter beans." Rosalind complied with the request of the negress, and was again turning away to indulge in her sad retrospection, when Marietta again addressed her. "I tell you what, Miss Rosalin, no body bout here has sich a fine garden as Misses—not eben de Jedge—an hit jist beats de world tu see dem fine watermilions an anti-lopes dat am riz here."

"Now yous talking, Marietta, fur dat am true as gospel preaching, dat ole Miss does hab de berry best ob ebry-



ting riz here. And as tu de Jedge, he remits hit himself, dat our garden beats hisen out ob sight, and eberybody knows dat Ise titled to haf ob de credit fur hit. I always knows jist when sich and sich had ought to be planted, and hit all depinds on de moon, Miss Rosalin—everything depinds on de moon!” expostulated Peter, in a self-confident tone.

Rosalind listened to Peter’s argument, with apparent interest. His reference to the Judge gave her the opportunity of broaching the subject upon which she much desired to speak—that of the Underwoods—and thus she begun:

“Uncle Peter, isn’t it most time for the Underwoods to be coming home?”

“Beg pardon, Miss Rosalin; but didn’t presactly understood you,” said the old man, placing his hand behind his ear.

Rosalind repeated the question, and Peter replied:

“Pears to me like Master Gerald tole me yisterday somthin bout dem coming home pretty soon, but I can’t presactly member what was said; but it was to this effec, dat being as we were gyïng to hev sich a yearly spring dat his folks would soon be home, specily since he have returned. Dey haven’t one of dem sot eyes on him fo ober free years, an him comin will fotch them sooner dis year. He sed, too, dat dey were gyïng tu fotch cumpiny back wid dem, an he said ”—

Here Peter stopped in a kind of puzzled manner, and then resumed:

“Well, I can’t tell what hit ment, as I hain’t no book



larning, but hit was dis, dat when dey all comes he would be redrop; an now, Miss Rosalin, bein as you is a scollar, I wish you would tell me what dat means."

Rosalind laughed merrily at the old man's French, in spite of her gloominess of a little while before, and replied:

"He said he would be detrop, and that is French, and means that he will be one too many when they all come."

"Tank you, Miss Rosalin, fo lightnin me on de subjec. Hits a mighty fine ting tu hev book larning, an Massa Gerald has got hit, I can tell you, an he's sich a fine young gentlemen, tu. He neber sees me dat he don't speak tu me and say, 'How's you Mistress, Peter?' An now, since you hev come, he says, 'How am de ladies, Peter?' An yisterdy he said, 'Gib dem my complemets;' an here it's way de next day an I neber tought to reliber dat message afore—please scuse me, Miss Rosalin, fo my negligence, an I will try an not be so forgetful in the futur."

Rosalind assured Peter of his full pardon. And now that her task was done, she left the two old servants and wandered away from the garden to the orchard. The great pear and apple trees were all in bloom, and with each breeze their odorous white and pink petals were showered upon her, and, sitting down beneath one of the old trees, she gave herself up to pleasant thoughts. "So he remembers me, does he?" she soliloquized. "How nice he is, and how I should enjoy hearing his pleasant voice again. I do hope, too, I will like his sisters as well as I liked him on our first meeting; but, I fear I shall never enjoy a visit to Ivy Crown, for since I



saw that strange creature in those enchanting grounds, it seems as though I could think of nothing else."

When Rosalind's soliloquy had reached this juncture, she looked up, and who should she see coming towards her but the object of her thoughts—Gerald Underwood! He was walking slowly along the road, just beyond the enclosure, and looking in the direction of where she sat. It was useless for her to pretend that she had not discovered him, for when she looked up his glance met her own, and, raising his hat and smiling, genially, he bade her "a pleasant good-morning." Rosalind answered his greeting in a friendly manner, thinking he would pass on; but instead, however, he climbed the fence, and with one bound stood beside her. As before, he was attired in a hunting suit, and carried a gun, which he rested against the fence, and then, in his easy, graceful way, asked her how she was enjoying the country at such a delightful season of the year? Her answer was simple and unaffected, and when she added that she intended going into the woods to gather some of the beautiful wild flowers that Peter had been telling her about, he smiled at her childish ideas, and said, "Don't do that, for fear of getting poisoned by those rank weeds; rather let me send you a bouquet. By the way," he added, "you ought to see Ivy Crown now, with its white and cream, pink and purple hyacinths, blooming on the borders. There are also heliotropes, violets, and old-fashioned tulips, and a variety of other flowers, with whose botanical name I am not in the least familiar. But I stopped to tell you that my sisters will be at home in a few days, and I will



be most happy to have you meet them. Millie, the youngest, is about your age, and I am very fond of her. As to Henrietta, the eldest, she considers me a crank and a nuisance, and I really believe feels relieved when I am away."

Rosalind expressed much surprise at this, then added: "I cannot understand how a sister can think of a brother in that fashion; however, it may be that in a teasing way you make yourself disagreeable to your sister. I have seen boys at school, who were really devoted to their sisters, yet took a perfect delight in tormenting them; but I would not have supposed you to be of that disposition, tho' my slight acquaintance hardly admits of my forming a correct estimate."

To one so accustomed to listen to the cut-and-dried phrases of conventionality when in the society of women, interspersed, too, with such silly affectation, as Gerald Underwood had always been, there was something refreshing in this original speech. Her manner, too, was so sincere, and there was such an earnest expression on her face while she was speaking. Truly, she appeared a new phase of a girl; for tho' her well-modulated tones, and correct language, bespoke intellect and culture, she impressed him as being entirely different from the modern young lady; she was a girl, too, who blushed naturally, and exposed the very prettiest of dimples when she smiled, and had the loveliest blue eyes he had ever looked into.

Those were the thoughts that were passing in his mind while the girl, amid the blossoming fruit trees, with the



white, sweet-scented clover beneath her feet, stood there confronting him. True, he had admired her greatly on the afternoon of their accidental meeting, but then her face had been flushed with the unusual excitement under which she was laboring, and there was a frightened look in her eyes, which now looked at him with such a calm, restful expression within their fathomless blue depths, and her face was as lovely as the morning was fair, while every movement was unstudied grace. But how long would she remain thus? he asked himself while he stood there beside her, noting the pink flushes come and go in the pretty dimpled cheeks. How long will it take for the flattery and adulation of the world to spoil her and make her as the rest of her sex? he mentally inquired, while all the charms of her physical and intellectual beauty dawned upon him in their fullness.

Rosalind, too, was taking a keener scrutiny of her new acquaintance than she had done on the day of their previous meeting, and she saw more distinctly in the morning sunlight every lineament of his handsome features, every graceful movement of his fine form.

“But why that look of weariness that she could easily discern while scanning his countenance? What cause had he, so gifted and fortunate, to become a victim of ennui?”

And while these two, who were comparatively strangers to each other, continued talking, they were also engaged in studying one another with the most profound interest.

Thus an hour passed briefly away, which to them had only appeared a few minutes, for during this time there



had awakened in the hearts of each an increased and undefined, yet unmistakable emotion, which arises between those who are unconsciously drawn towards each other. A new and strange animation possessed Rosalind, changing the calm of her beauty into sparkling vivacity, and for the time being causing her to forget her sorrow, and only to remember the present moments that seemed to disperse themselves so swiftly. An exquisite hope, full with ardent life, and imbued with the force of a strong nature, was stealing into her life; but it was of so intangible a kind that she could not have possibly analyzed it had she tried. On the other hand, Gerald Underwood felt a great admiration for this lovely child-woman, whom he had found, in their short acquaintance, to be so unsophisticated and pure-minded; who was totally devoid of art, possessing no worldly knowledge whatever, and of a higher organization than is rarely found in woman, especially one so young; combined, too, with that sensitive timidity which characterizes pure and spiritual nature.

Part of these conclusions he had arrived at on their first meeting, and upon this, their second, was doubly impressed with the truth of the analysis he had made of her character. He was not a man to be easily impressed, for his wisdom of the world taught him to distrust his fellow-creatures, and to draw himself within himself; or, in other words, to draw back those sensitive nerves of response which connect with the personalities of others, and to assume an attitude of mental reserve, making up his mind that the less he expected of others the more secure he would be in his future content. Eight years prior to



this he had become greatly enamored with a young girl, who proved herself as heartless as she was beautiful. After becoming engaged to her he had gone to Germany to complete his studies, with the intention of returning in the course of two years for the purpose of consummating their marriage. What had been his surprise and shocked emotions upon hearing from her, before the terminus of one year, that she desired to be released from her engagement with him, having found a more desirable match in the person of a Senator—and millionaire. Then, by way of conciliating matters, had added that he—Gerald—of course, had attached but little import to the engagement, as it was, after all, nothing but a boy and girl affair; however, she would always remember him with the warmest feeling of interest and friendship. At that time Gerald was just entering his twenty-second year; and as had been the case with many young men at that age, he had allowed another personality to lay hold upon his life, which he had loved and trusted as a part of his own being, and felt that he would have been willing to have given his very soul into her keeping.

Imagine the effect produced upon his feelings on receiving this news, that to many young men of a less strong will than Gerald possessed would have proven indeed disastrous. But tho' he was young at that time and full of ardor, and had entered upon this stage of life full of confidence and susceptibilities—and was of naturally fine sensibilities—thereby sustaining a severe shock to his loyal nature, and causing him for months afterwards to lose sight of the charms and possibilities that the future



held out before him—in spite of all this, pride and courage finally came to his rescue, and again his appetite for living returned; he had conquered the passions and affections of his eager youth, but all his former self had passed away with his first disillusion. The wound was healed, but the scar remained. And so he had learned from that and other experiences, since coming in contact with the world, that it was entirely necessary to keep a strict guard over one's feelings, and in everything exercise a firm self-control. Hence it was on this morning when he had allowed his eyes to rest admiringly upon Rosalind, and his heart to believe in her goodness and loveliness of character, that he suddenly bethought himself, and the idea that he was becoming too much interested in this girl immediately took possession of him; he therefore determined to tear himself away from so enchanting a personage.

“I will be making a fool of myself again pretty soon if I linger here much longer,” he thought, contemptuously; then without further ceremony he took up his gun and bade Miss Morton a pleasant adieu.

Rosalind stood there for a long time after he had gone, wondering within herself at his almost abrupt departure. Then musing dreamily, she walked slowly towards the house.

\* \* \* \* \*

The lovely month of May was only a week old when Ivy Crown was again thrown open; and instead of the solitary quiet that had pervaded it during the past months, everything bespoke life and confusion. A



wagon-load of baggage had just been deposited on the piazza, and a couple of carriages had also just landed their human freight at the door of this hospitable mansion. Old lady Underwood and the Judge bustled about giving orders to the servants, as to where the trunks should be taken, and assigning their guests to their respective apartments. For a wonder only six visitors—three ladies and the same number of gentlemen—had returned with the family to spend a portion of the spring and summer at Ivy Crown—the beauties of which were not unknown to any of them excepting the honorable Kirby Barton, whom Henrietta had captured while spending the season just past in Florida. The other two young men were a pair of most worthy cadets who resided in Frankfort, Ky., both of whom were the sons of old friends of Judge Underwood. The ladies were respectively Mrs. Laura Porter, a young and beautiful widow, Miss Nellie Stevenson and Nettie Rhea; the former two were the friends of Henrietta; the latter, a schoolmate of Millie's; all three having met the Underwoods during their Southern tour the past season, had accordingly accompanied them to their beautiful home. The Underwoods were among those who are termed Kentucky thoroughbreds; hence to be their invited guest was no small honor, as Judge Underwood was known throughout that part of the State to be one of its most influential citizens. He had been among the first to answer to the call "to arms" when the war-cry rang out, and, as a Major had ranked amongst the bravest officers, who so gallantly defended the Southern cause; and tho' many—who had



known him while acting in this capacity—still persisted in calling him Major, he greatly preferred being called by the term of his legal profession, which was that of the law; later he had held the office of Judge of the Supreme Court; at this period, however, he had quietly withdrawn from active life, resolving to spend the remainder of his days with his family, sharing their travels and social pleasures, and by this means recuperating his former exuberant health. He was a kind father, devoted to his family, having no wish beyond their happiness; and at this time of life all his pride and ambitions were centered in Gerald, to whom he had given every possible advantage of both education and travel; and in this son the fruition of his hopes were indeed realized, for he was everything that could have been expected of him—truly it seemed that all the mythical deities had presided over his birth. Apparently it was an ideal family, and none could have seen the grand looking man, with the graceful old lady, with waving, silvery locks, and clear cut, patrician features, leaning so confidently upon his arm, without experiencing a thrill of deferential admiration. The sisters, too, were remarkably pretty, tho' complete opposites—Henrietta, dark, tall, and stately, and Millie, so petite and altogether lovely. Then came Fred, a bright, handsome lad of twelve, who rejoiced in having acquired all the modern slang, and forever teasing his sister, Millie.

On the arrival of the party at Ivy Crown upon this magnificent spring day, the first thought of all the family—with the exception of Henrietta—was of Gerald; but



none were so eager to see him as Camille, and immediately after assisting in disposing of their lady visitors, the little sister went in search of him. This girl had never been happier than while rambling about with her big brother, who, nearly four years ago, had left her a child of twelve wearing short dresses and bib aprons; now she was almost sixteen, and quite a young lady who had for some time been doing up her pretty golden curls into the most bewitching knot, and wore the loveliest of side bangs.

She wondered if her dear old Gerry would know her, and longed to see the effect of these mature changes upon him; and while she wandered around in her vain search for him, she inquired of every servant she met, "Is brother Gerald at home?" but none of them could enlighten her. "He was at home earlier in the day, but he might hab rid away later," one had said to her. So Millie was about giving up the hopeless search, and returning to the house, when she caught a glimpse of him some distance off, walking slowly and thoughtfully toward the grounds. She stepped behind a clump of box, and concealing herself from view, waited until he came up, and then, as he was passing, she suddenly rose up, and threw her arms about him.

Before he could recover from the surprise she had given him, she burst out, "Oh, Gerry, Gerry! I am so glad to see you, you dear, dear old boy; and I was so mad with you for not answering my last letter; and now you are at home again and I am so glad; so glad!"

She did not wait to hear what he had to say for himself, but continued to talk on in her impulsive, random



way, and ended up at last by fairly smothering him with kisses. When he did manage to free himself sufficiently to take a look at her, he gave a prolonged whistle, and said, "It cannot be possible that this is the little sister I left not quite four years ago? Why, Millie, you are quite a young lady, and who would have thought it?" At this Millie laughed gayly, and replied, "I suppose I am about as tall as I will ever be; though papa still persists in calling me midget; but I have grown a great deal, haven't I, Gerry?" she added, noting that her brother still stood regarding her with a look of pleasant surprise shining in his clear brown eyes, which told her plainer than words that he was pleased with her appearance, and felt a great admiration for his little sister.

And well he might be proud of the lovely, bewitching girl, with her fair hair, rosebud mouth, and laughing blue eyes; truly, she was a little beauty. But he did not wish to flatter her too much, for already he could discern slight symptoms of vanity in the pretty, graceful little creature; so he changed the current of their talk by inquiring "whom they had brought home with them?" "Oh, not many; only Nettie Rhea, Nellie Stevenson, Henry Courts and Edwin Townsend. Of course you knew all these when they were wee bits of girls and boys; but Henrietta has brought a new beau home with her, whom I do not think you have ever met. You see, Het-tie got acquainted with him while we were in Florida, and he got dead stuck on her, and so he came with us home."

Millie was too busy talking to note the look of surprise and amusement that crossed her brother's face



while she was speaking; so it was her turn to be surprised when he interrupted her by saying:

“My little sister must pardon me for so abruptly stopping her, but I am shocked to hear such an expression fall from such pretty lips; is it possible, Millie, that you have learned to speak slang?”

The girl's cheeks crimsoned at this reproof, and she essayed to excuse herself by replying that Fred had taught her such expressions, begging that he would excuse her, and also promising to try not to repeat such again.

“You are fully pardoned, I can assure you, but you have not told me of all our guests yet, and I am waiting to hear.”

“Oh, yes, I had forgotten; well, as I said before, there is Nettie Rhea; you knew her when she was a little girl; she, too, has grown up like myself, and is quite a young lady; Nellie Stevenson, Hettie's old chum, has also improved wonderfully, and is quite a masher; she and Nettie both went South with us last winter; but I must tell you of somebody else, whom you used to know before she was married, and who is a widow now, and the very prettiest woman you ever saw; but somehow, just between you and I, she does not impress me as favorably as she does Hettie and the rest of the family; for tho' I do not exactly dislike her, I can not say that I like her; but she is very, very pretty, indeed!”

Thus emphasizing the last sentence, Millie stopped speaking, apparently for the purpose of recovering her breath, while Gerald, whose curiosity had become somewhat aroused, took occasion to ask:



“Well, I am all attention, and curious to know the name of the lady that has called forth so much admiration.”

“What a scatter-brain person you must think me, Gerald, by omitting such an important item, but thank goodness it is not too late, so here goes; her name is Mrs. Laura Porter, a widow, young, beautiful and rich; so my bachelor brother had better look sharp, or else he may fall a victim to her charms, as novel writers say; but what’s the matter, Gerry? you are as white as a ghost,” she ended by exclaiming in a startled tone.

Gerald very soon calmed Millie’s fears by assuring her that it was only her imagination in thinking that he had changed color; but not so, for at her words his face had indeed become pallid, for the woman she had told him of was no other than the despoiler of his youthful dreams of happiness, who now, after all these years, had again crossed his pathway. But the feelings that this news had awakened within him were only momentarily, for all the pain that she had caused him, all the bitterness he had experienced at her hands, had long since died; and in his heart he could find nothing but a cold indifference, blended with contempt, for the one who had so wantonly trifled with his loyal affection, and this indifference had for the last few years influenced his whole life, and caused him to assume an attitude of doubt and disbelief toward all womankind. However, he had no desire of again meeting her, but could see no way of avoiding it; therefore he resolved to face the ordeal as calmly and courageously as possible, and was very glad to have had Millie thus prepare him, as forewarned is forearmed.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE YOUNG WIDOW.

“Upon her cheek a damask glows,  
As fine as the pomgranate knows.”

DINNER at Ivy Crown was served at the fashionable hour of eight; and Gerald—having met Millie at about six o'clock—had fully two hours in which to call to aid all his emotional balance and self-control, assuming that perfect indifference that had become natural to him. During this interval he had made a careful toilette, and gone to the room of his grandmother, where he had found his father and the old lady anxiously awaiting him. While engaged in answering their many questions regarding his health, his voyage, etc., Fred came in, who also gave him a hearty greeting; hence, with the exception of Henrietta, he had met every member of the family when the dinner hour arrived. Later on Gerald was ushered into the dining room, by the two elders, with all the polite hospitality that could have been shown an honored guest, where he found Hetty and her visitors all assembled. He shook the hand of his sister, and saluted the cheek she offered, gave Mr. Barton a hand-shake also, to whom Hetty had at once introduced him, then, in like manner, shook the hands of the rest of the company, and took his seat at the table between Millie and Nettie Rhea—directly opposite Mrs. Porter.



And while the two girls besieged him with questions, he divided his time by answering and observing the rest of the guests.

He saw that Mr. Barton was a fair-haired man of forty, or thereabouts, a bachelor, so Millie had informed him, he being the same that she had described as so "dead stuck" on Hettie.

Then there was pretty Nellie Stevenson, with her golden hair and wide open blue eyes, looking more like a wax doll than real flesh and blood, and as she sat there coquettishly chatting with the two cadets, it was evident that they were fast becoming rivals. Hettie, too, was, if anything, handsomer than ever, with a little haughtier air, perhaps, and a more perfect pose of her regal form. Gerald observed all of this, nothing being lost upon him, and while he took these casual glances, and at the same time chatted to Nettie and Millie, he did not fail to see the wonderfully pretty eyes that were watching him from across the table; nor did he fail to realize the truth of Millie's words regarding the widow; for if as a girl Laura Varian had been beautiful, Laura Porter was even more attractive, as a woman. Her eyes were large, dark and soft in expression; her hair of that indescribable color between brown and gold, yet with all the shades of the sunlight lingering in its circled coils, while added to this, was a creamy brunette complexion—possibly a little too colorless; a pair of pretty lips which appeared to smile naturally, thus disclosing the loveliest and pearliest of teeth. But the sight of the development of the magnificent beauty of his girl sweetheart did not have the effect



of awakening one heart throb of regret for the past, or fear for the future; and the admiration he experienced upon viewing her in the full bloom of womanhood was such as looking upon a fine work of art would have inspired. Not a feeling or emotion of their former relation remained, having been so totally obliterated from his life that he almost doubted that such had ever existed, and proudly acknowledged his complete mastery of himself. Old lady Underwood, upon this occasion, did the honors of hostess as graciously as she had thirty years ago, and the Judge appeared the same genial and hospitable gentleman that had characterized him as a model host. Thus it was that good cheer prevailed, and it was with a mixture of admiration and content that Gerald looked upon the pleasant scene. Fred, sitting next to Mrs. Porter, endeavored to entertain her during the meal, but, though she smiled and appeared all attention, he was made conscious of the fact that she was not listening to him by committing the error of laughing when he informed her of the death of one of his school fellows, and again exclaiming, pathetically, when he told her that the Lexingtons had scored the Cincinnati team twice that season, and was sure of beating the St. Louis boys in an early engagement. "She has not heard a word I have said to her, but is watching Gerald instead," the boy said to himself, mentally resolving that he would not speak another word to her during the dinner.

Soon, however, conversation became general around the sumptuous board, and Millie amused them all by detailing her search for Gerald that afternoon.



“I had almost concluded that he had gone off again to the South Sea Islands or the North Pole, or some other remote part of the world, when I suddenly spied him out,” she added, mischievously, at which Fred ventured to remark:

“I think it would have looked rightdown flunky in Gerald to have run off again without us seeing him, especially at this time, when the fishing is so good, and he promised me in his last letter to teach me just how to cast a line.”

At this speech from the boy he was rewarded by a look of reproof from his father and a gentle head shake from his grandmother.

Then the little ripple of talk all at once seemed to have come to an end, and only Gerald's voice was heard. He was speaking to Nettie and Millie, continuing the conversation that the trio had been having all to themselves, and his words fell with a significant meaning upon the ear of the widow when he said:

“I am anxious for you to meet her, Millie, for you will find her a most charming young girl, and she will make for Nettie and yourself a congenial companion.”

At this speech Hettie arched her pretty dark brows inquiringly, and for some moments turned her attention from the adoring suitor who sat beside her and regarded her brother attentively, while Nellie opened her blue eyes a little wider than usual, thus expressing her curiosity to know of whom it was Gerald could be speaking, deeming him one of the kind of men who never condescended to praise anything belonging to womankind.



But neither by look or action did Mrs. Porter betray the least interest or curiosity in the subject; instead, however, she again tried to draw Fred into conversation by asking him sweetly, "If he would allow her to go fishing with him?"

Notwithstanding the fact that this woman had appeared very much pleased with every one upon this, the occasion of her first meeting with Gerald for eight years, she was nevertheless greatly chagrined and disappointed within her own mind, for the meeting between herself and Gerald had not been what she had expected.

Had Gerald evinced any coldness or restraint in his demeanor towards her, or appeared less self-poised and independent, she would have felt no doubts but that he still suffered the pangs her rejection had caused him. But on the other hand he had met her calmly and greeted her pleasantly, with no token whatever of sadness or regret lingering over him, and not one vestige of that youthful adoration remained in his countenance which at the time of their parting had been expressed in every glance of his speaking eyes.

All this she realized at once, and moreover, that all the promises of his youth had indeed been fulfilled; for tho' nothing of the sentimental lover could be traced in the handsome features of this man, the look of firm resolve and determination that had settled there were far more worthy of admiration; but above all she noted more particularly the expression of perfect indifference with which he regarded her. Hence she saw at once that all was changed with him, and that there was no sign of any desire on his



part to again take up the role of the lover, and spend his time in composing little poems to her eyes, lips, and hair, as he had done in days of yore.

No! she learned from his face, which she had been so carefully studying, that the lover of her girlhood was very different indeed from the man she had found on that day. This realization with her only added to his attractiveness and made her more desirous of again winning him to her; the task would of course not be so easy as it had been before, therefore would be far more interesting.

But would she succeed? That was the question she asked herself an hour later, when she had sought her own room to think over these things, and hide the humiliation occasioned by Gerald's manner towards her. Headache had been her plea for retiring at such an early hour, and now that she was sure of no one disturbing her, she took the opportunity of studying herself in the large mirror before her. As has been before stated, she was a woman possessed of extraordinary beauty, with no decided type, for though her eyes were lustrously dark, her hair was of the order of a blonde; not above the medium height, and not as tall as Henrietta by perhaps two inches; but her figure was plump and symmetrical, with all the rounded curves of youth.

Upon this evening there was an unwonted brilliancy in her eyes and color in her cheeks, giving to the creamy complexion the tint of peach blossoms, which added wonderfully to her beauty. That she was satisfied with the image the mirror reflected was evident, for a bright smile wreathed her pretty lips, bringing out the dimples in her



rounded cheeks to the best possible advantage. "Yes, I shall win; why shouldn't I—with beauty, wealth, and everything that is calculated to make a woman alluring to man? But I will have to use a little rouge, as this black makes me appear paler than ever, and I have discovered this evening that pink cheeks are very becoming to me; they were always pink when Gerald was so fond of me, and I will look more like myself with the use of a cosmetic."

And thus the young widow sat through the solitary hours, thinking out and planning the best method of again drawing Gerald to her side. Her marriage to Senator Porter had been of a mercenary character, but it had been the accomplishment of her ambitious dreams and satisfied her desire for admiration.

But she had sacrificed all the better feeling her vain heart had possessed, which Gerald alone had awakened, and now the one great hope that she had in life was to renew their former relation, which would eventually end in her becoming his wife.

With this object in view, she had managed to ingratiate herself into the good graces of Hettie; and upon learning that Gerald was expected home from his tour throughout the land of the Orient, had accepted the invitation of the sister to make one of her summer guests at "Ivy Crown." While Mrs. Porter considered these possibilities in her room, Gerald and Millie were discussing some one else, and that one was Rosalind Morton. Edwin Townsend had, through jealousy and spite, transferred his attention to Nettie Rhea, and, as the two promenaded about



the grounds in the moonlight, Hettie and the Hon. Mr. Barton sat in the parlor and talked in low tones, while Nellie Stevenson and Henry Courts played dominoes in a remote corner of the same room. Hence, since all were so appropriately, and apparently happily paired off, Millie and Gerald found a chance of enjoying a quiet tete-a-tete. Gerald had been describing Rosalind to Millie at her earnest request. "And this girl is about my own age, you say, Gerry?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes, or probably a year or so older, though she doesn't look a day, but is more womanish in her manners; however, I will take you over to Morton Place to-morrow and introduce you, so you can judge of her from your own point of view."

"Oh, thank you, Gerry; you were always good to me, and I shall try my very best to please you about everything. But tell me, how do you like the pretty widow?"

Gerald's brow grew a little dark for a moment, while he seemed to be pondering within his own mind what reply to make to this very inopportune query; then, seeing that Millie was regarding him closely, he said:

"Well, really, Millie, I am almost ashamed to admit it, but I haven't given the lady a single thought since I met her at dinner; but you were right in calling her pretty, for she is, indeed, a handsome woman."

"And so there is no danger of you falling in love with her, then, since you were not affected on first sight, is there, Gerry?" Millie asked, thoughtfully.

"Not in the least, little sister. Is it possible that you do not know that I am a confirmed old bachelor?"



“Yes, I heard Hettie telling Mrs. Porter the other day that you were one, and I thought I would ask you about it, and now is about as good a time as I will have. So please tell me how it is done.” By this Gerald begun to look puzzled, and asked, “How what is done, Millie? I really do not know what you are driving at, and am waiting to be enlightened before I can answer your question.”

“Why, the confirmation, of course; what ceremonies did you go through in taking these vows? and what kind of robes do men wear upon these occasions? and is it like joining other secret societies, such as the Odd Fellows and Masons, where every member, upon their initiation, has to ride a goat and climb a slick pole? Please tell me all about it, Gerry; I am just dying to know.” The pretty piquant face of the girl wore an expression of semi-seriousness, and it was hard to decipher whether she was in jest or earnest while plying these questions to her big brother. However, he was ready for the emergency, whatever it might be, and said, jovially, “I would take pleasure in imparting to you the knowledge of these things and the ceremonies attending them, but then you know it would no longer be a secret, and it would also be breaking faith with the order, the penalty of which might be very severe; and I am quite sure,” he added, letting his voice drop into a tone as serious as that of her own, “that my little sister would not have me do anything of this kind.”

“No, of course not, but I am surprised that you should have pledged yourself to an order that will never allow



you to marry, and you will have to live to be a cross old man all by yourself."

The pretty eyes of the girl wore a sorrowful look, and her voice was full of anxiety while she spoke. Seeing that Millie believed him to be in earnest about the existence of such a society, Gerald commenced to laugh.

"I really believe you thought I meant that there was in truth such a fraternity—which there possibly may be; however, I am not a member and do not ever expect to make absurd pledges to man; still, one can make up his mind upon a subject and be as firm in belief and intention as if he had signed a dozen pledges. I have almost become convinced within my own mind that I shall never marry, tho' I have taken no vow to that effect."

Millie pouted prettily, appearing somewhat disconcerted at the idea of Gerald having given her the laugh, agreeable to Fred's term of it, but Gerald's kind manner and unusual talkativeness soon dispelled every vestige of ill-humor, and caused her to become so absorbed in listening to his animated narration of incidents of his travels as to soon forget the circumstance. Then she in turn gave him a graphic description of her Southern tour, dwelling with enthusiasm upon her stay in New Orleans, how their party had been escorted by the elegant proprietor of the St. Charles Hotel on a visit to his beautiful sugar plantation, and how much they had all been made to feel at home while stopping there. Thus it was that the brother and sister became so much interested in each other that they forgot to note the flight of time until reminded of it by a clock in some distant part of the house chiming the hour of midnight.



“I fear my little sister has lost her beauty-sleep on my account this evening, and I will not keep you up any longer, for there is danger of your not being able to pay our visit to-morrow,” Gerald said as they were separating for the night.

“Oh, never fear that I would let anything hinder me from paying that,” replied Millie, gayly, then she added saucily, “Be sure and dream of the pretty widow to-night!” and with this the laughing face disappeared up the stairs, and Gerald, too, retired to his own room.



## CHAPTER VI.

### MILLIE AND ROSALIND.

“At length I saw a lady within call,  
Still than chiseled marble standing there;  
A daughter of the gods divinely tall,  
And most divinely fair.”

RAIN in the forenoon on the following day prevented Millie and Gerald from paying their intended morning call, and as some gentleman visitors were there for luncheon, remaining several hours afterwards, it was almost four o'clock in the afternoon before the two could steal away unobserved and make their way towards Morton Place.

The day was radiant with sunshine and flowers, and the air pure and sweet, refreshed by the morning shower, whose glistening drops still lingered on leaf and blossom and hung suspended from overshadowing branches, thus resembling in the glittering sunlight the most precious gems, lending to Ivy Crown a loveliness almost divine.

As the sister and brother launched forth into the beauty of the outer world, and side by side passed from the lovely grounds into the sylvan wood that divided their home from their neighbors, Millie's spirits rose, and she chatted incessantly as they traversed the woodland pathway.

At last the summit of the hill which lay between Ivy Crown and Morton Place was reached, and as the walls of the old red house loomed up before them there arose



another vision, much nearer and far more desirable to look upon, which was that of a young and beautiful girl. That she had not observed the couple walking towards her was evident from the fact that she continued in the effort of reaching a limb of snowy dog-wood blossoms that were somewhat removed from her grasp. Her face being partly turned away, it was impossible to have a good view of it, but Millie was satisfied of its rare beauty by the sight of the pretty profile and graceful poise of the white neck and symmetrical figure. And while the girl stood there, entirely unconscious of the fact that two pair of eyes were regarding her intently, Millie exclaimed, sotto voce:

“It is she, Gerry, and what a very pretty girl she is, and how beautifully tall!”

“Divinely tall, you mean,” corrected the brother.

“Yes, I know whatever you say is right, of course, Gerry, but I think her just lovely; but do cough or make some kind of noise before we come right up to her; it will be so embarrassing and startle her so much.”

However, before Gerald could carry out this suggestion, Rosalind had turned about and stood facing them; but there was no token of embarrassment in her manner, and only a little deeper flush came into the dimpled cheeks, as she greeted Gerald pleasantly, who at once presented her to Millie.

“I am so glad to know you, and to hear that we are neighbors,” said Millie, in her sweet, childish way, shaking hands with Rosalind, and bestowing upon her one of her most witching smiles.

The friendliness of the girl communicated itself at



once to Rosalind, making her feel as if she had met an old acquaintance instead of a stranger, and there was a ring of genuine pleasure in the clear sweet voice when she replied:

“And I, too, am very happy to know you, and trust that we shall be the best of friends.”

There was nothing of the usual formula of repeating names between the two upon being introduced, and Gerald thought he had never witnessed a meeting so original and free from effect, especially where two girls were concerned.

There was no doubt but that the admiration of the two was mutual, judging from the pleased expression that stole into the face of each upon being presented.

“How lovely she is,” Rosalind was repeating to herself, and Millie in like manner was saying, “The very sweetest and prettiest girl I ever met, but how different from all the rest of them; and there is nothing flip about her either—at least that’s the way Fred would put it—but her manners are perfect, and she has such lovely eyes,” she added, thus ending her mental cogitations.

“We were just coming to pay you a call,” replied Millie, when Rosalind proposed going to the house, “and it is very fortunate we found you; I am so glad you came in this direction, or else we would have perhaps missed seeing you to-day.” And as the three walked on; the girls chatted as if they had known each other always, while Gerald was content to listen, replying in monosyllables only to Millie’s interrogations and the several remarks that Rosalind addressed to him.



Miss Morton, senior, received her niece's visitors in her usual kind but undemonstrative manner; nor did she forget her duties as hostess. Therefore, while the young people talked the old lady summoned Marietta by ringing a small silver bell, who, upon answering the summons, only had to glance into the room to learn what was required of her, then hastened to dispense her mistress' hospitality among her guests. In a few moments she returned with a tray of tempting fruit, cake, and also a decanter of cool delicious claret, of which they all partook heartily.

"One can well appreciate Kentucky hospitality after having wandered around the world a few years," Gerald remarked, after having repeatedly praised the cake, claret, etc.

Whereupon, Miss Vilinda plied him with a number of questions regarding his travels, and while the two talked, Rosalind and Millie became the most attentive listeners. And while he described the many discomforts one becomes heir to, especially after leaving Europe, his narration was fraught with deepest interest. "The filth and degradation of the poorer classes of Italy are nothing to be compared with what one comes in contact in some parts of Asia," he commented, then went on to tell of the ignorance and superstition of the Arabs and their thieving propensities. The quick intellect of the old lady readily grasped the ideas conveyed by Gerald's versatile descriptions, and, so much was the interest that she evinced, he continued talking to her much longer than he had calculated when he had casually mentioned the subject of his travels. However, his patience did not flag,



nor did he lose sight of the fact that his auditors were ladies.

Thus, more than an hour passed pleasantly by, at the end of which time Millie rose to go, saying, "I wish we could stay longer, but I really cannot; I left a school girl friend at home, who no doubt thinks bad of me for leaving her so long. You see, Miss Vilinda, Gerry and I are playing truant to-day, for I did so much want to see your niece, and then you know it is so nice to have my big brother escort me, and that is why I did not care for a third party. But I cannot go until I exact a promise of you, which is that Rosalind may go with Gerry and I fishing to-morrow. We will come by for her, and remain at the pond all day. Grandmamma will send our luncheon to us, and we will just have a lovely time."

Miss Morton could no more resist complying with Millie's wishes than she could have accomplished any other impossible thing, hence she answered that she had no objection to Rosalind making one of the fishing party. So it was agreed upon that the three would go to the large fish pond belonging to the premises of Judge Underwood, on the following morning. Whereupon, the brother and sister commenced to take their leave.

"I hope that you will come over often to visit Rosalind," said the mistress of Morton Place, hospitably.

"Oh! I am going to make you all tired of me directly, as I expect to be always on hand, and I fear I will prove one too many for you!" exclaimed Millie, merrily.

"In that case—according to our nursery rhymes—Miss Vilinda will have to do like the old woman did who



lived in a shoe, and I really believe an experience of this kind would act like a charm upon Millie, whom I am inclined to think never had a whipping in her life, or was ever sent off to bed before it suited her ladyship's pleasure," said Gerald, smiling affectionately upon his sister, who immediately retorted: "I should not mind the whipping so much as being sent to bed without my supper!"

"But, doesn't it say, 'She gave them some broth without any bread, then whipped them all soundly and put them to bed?' " asked Gerald, in a conciliatory tone, then added, "So, after all, they were not quite supperless."

"Well, that wouldn't be so bad if the broth was such as that of which we have just partaken," said Millie, mischievously. At this moment their attention was attracted by Polly, who, for some time, had been moving about in a most impatient manner, as if anxious for the departure of the visitors; and now, unable to keep quiet any longer, she shrieked out, "Go to bed, Rosa; it's your bed time, Rosa, my pretty red Rosa!" At this unlooked-for interlocution, Millie fairly screamed with merriment, and Gerald, too, was greatly amused. But the bird suddenly changed her song into the wildest peals of hysterical laughter, that neither Miss Vilinda's entreaties or demands could silence, amid which the visitors took their leave, Rosalind accompanying them a short distance.

"Don't forget to be ready for us to-morrow," Millie called back, after they had separated; and Rosalind responded that she "would not forget."



Thus it was that the afternoon, which had been so delightful to Rosalind, by proving such a break in the monotony of her life, ended. It was bright and early on the following morning, and long before any of the rest of the family were up, when Gerald and Millie—preparatory to their day's outing—breakfasted all to themselves in the spacious diningroom of Ivy Crown. A little later on they were wending their way through the green meadows, still laden with sparkling dew drops glistening in the morning sunlight.

They found Rosalind already equipped for her walk, and as they started from Morton Place, Peter came up in the rear bearing a hamper containing the luncheon which Miss Morton had so carefully prepared, and a number of fishing poles. And while the little birds flitted here and there, chanting their morning lay and brushing away the dew drops with their bright wings, the two girls chatted in real schoolgirl fashion, and seemed as happy and as free of care as the bright little feathered songsters. It was not long before they emerged from the wood they had been traversing, and passed into a deep meadow, at the foot of which lay the fish pond. Upon reaching this, however, they found the sun much too bright to fish, so they sought out a shady nook and seated themselves, to wait for the few fleeting clouds to concentrate and bring about a welcome shade. And while the girls sat down, side by side, Gerald—removed a sufficient distance to smoke his morning cigar—took the opportunity of studying the faces of the two, and drawing a contrast



between them, which was a most striking one, indeed. About Rosalind's, there was a pronounced personality; and he was obliged to admit that this girl, with clear cut, intellectual features, proud firm mouth, and the sublime calm of expression, which shone dreamily from the violet eyes, was a new phase of character, and one that he could not easily comprehend. She was so womanly, and yet so independent and far removed from the modern girl, of whom his sister was a fair type.

Millie so enthusiastically talkative and vivacious, whose moods came and went like sunshine and clouds on an April day, while, on the other hand, Rosalind's mood seemed to never vary. At last the shadow appeared, and they immediately set about getting lines in order for their morning's sport. At this juncture Fred, accompanied by black Jim, who came to bring the luncheon basket and a tin can filled with fishing worms, appeared on the scene, and busied himself by giving directions as to the best position for a cast; then, taking their lines, he commenced adjusting the bait, which Jim produced from the can.

Upon sight of the worms Millie gave a little scream and fled some distance, crying out, "Oh, Fred, please don't put one of those hideous worms on my hook. I am so awfully afraid of them."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself to pretend to be afraid of a common fishing worm, and you a country girl too; I would just like to know what you would do if you should happen to see a snake," said Fred, in a tone expressive of total disgust.



"I think you had better take a drop on yourself," retorted Millie, forgetting her promise to Gerald concerning the usage of slang.

"I wish you would help me to bait these hooks, Gerry," said Fred, coming forward with his hands full of the squirming little creatures. But his brother had just gone to have the lunch baskets removed to a shady spot, and did not hear the request.

"Let me assist you," said Rosalind, at the same time taking from the boy's hand one of the largest of the fishing worms and attaching it to the hook.

"Jee-ruu-sa-lam!" vociferated Jim, upon seeing Rosalind take the worm into her white hand without a tremor.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Fred, "that's what I call Kentucky pluck, and I would like to know why Millie can't do that way, too; but no, she has to put on airs, and get scared to death if she sees a grasshopper; I declare it is enough to disgust any man to see such foolishness."

They all laughed at this oldish remark from the boy, and then became very intent in watching Rosalind baiting the hooks.

Gerald had returned to the group in time to witness the superior skill with which Rosalind handled the bait, and turning to her he said, "Allow me to compliment you, Miss Morton, on your steadiness of nerve, and permit me to add also that this is the first time I ever saw a lady undertake such a task."

"Thank you," Rosalind replied, while a brighter hue crept into her cheeks. "I have been accustomed to fishing all my life, and have unearthed these harmless little



creatures many a time when papa and I were getting ready for a day's outing."

She spoke in the same honest, straightforward manner that characterized her speech upon all occasions, and sufficed to impress every one with its genuineness.

Upon hearing this Millie appeared greatly elated, and, clapping her hands, assured Rosalind that she was a daisy, but receiving a look from Gerald, which warned her of the fact that she had said something displeasing to him, she sought about in her usual childish way to correct herself. "I meant to say you were a brick," she corrected, looking at Gerald for an approving smile. But this had proven too much for the brother, who, no longer able to retain his gravity, had given way to a hearty laugh, in which Rosalind and Fred had both joined, while Jim, too, had spread his mouth in a broad grin.

"I can't see for the life of me what you all are laughing at," said Millie, poutingly.

"I fear my little sister has forgotten the promise she made me a few days ago in regard to using slang," explained Gerald, kindly, "and it was by correcting your first speech you used a much more slangy phrase that caused our amusement," he added, seeing that Millie continued to sulk.

"Well, what else could I have said to express myself so well?" she asked, rather sharply.

"You could have said Miss Morton was quite brave, or something to that effect," replied the brother, still looking amused.

"But I can never stop to place my words in such proper



style, and it does come so handy to have these expressions always ready."

"Well, never mind, I am sure I appreciate the compliment, for it sounded very sincere indeed!" said Rosalind, conciliatorily.

Then a comparative silence fell upon the little company, while each became intent on their present employment.

Gerald sat between Rosalind and his sister, and did not fail to see with what skillfulness the former handled her rod, throwing her line out as far as it would reach into the water, while at the end of each cast she would let her bait hang for some time in the current; thus she drew out minnow after minnow until at least two dozen had been caught and successfully landed upon the shore, during which time Millie or Gerald neither had captured half the number.

Fred, who was a little way removed from the trio, ceased to angle, and sat silent, intently watching Rosalind; she was so different from other young ladies of his sister's acquaintance and association that she was a wonder to him, and his boyish fancy indulged in imagining her a great fairy, or queen in disguise; but could his cogitations have been put into words, he would have, no doubt, ended up by saying, "She's a regular lulu! and there's no mistake—worth a whole car load of Hettys and her chums, and I wouldn't care if she was my sister."

And so the hours flew by on golden wings, until the sun had climbed to the meridian; and then they set about arranging for their noonday repast, which was, according



to picnic fashion, to be served upon the ground. The two girls flitted about as busy as bees preparing for it, and soon their rural table was laid with the greatest care, while here and there, by way of embellishment, were placed little bunches of violets, and other wild flowers, that grew in luxuriance about the margin of the water. At this Fred strongly protested, for, boy-like, his appetite had considerably sharpened with his morning sport. "That's what I call downright foolishness, when a fellow is as hungry as a wolf," he clamored, while these arrangements were going on; then, turning to his brother, he called out, "I say, Gerry, can't you hurry up things a little?" One could not wonder at the boy's eagerness to lunch, upon surveying the tempting little eatables spread out before them. There was such a variety of viands that compose a good luncheon, consisting of nicely boiled ham, cold tongue, with such delicious salads; also tarts, cake, and pickle, and other little delicacies too numerous to mention; and, added to these, a couple of bottles of claret, one of each Grandmother Underwood and Aunt Vilinda had thoughtfully added.

At last they had everything placed about in a satisfactory manner, and to Fred's infinite relief, dinner was announced, and the agreeable little party sat themselves down to the enjoyment of their rural feast. Millie's ill-humor of the morning had entirely vanished, and she became more and more talkative as the day advanced. Rosalind, too, seemed to have caught the spirit of converse, and freely discussed whatever topic was introduced. And Gerald, as if by contagion, also joined in



their lively chat, with more interest than he was wont to manifest: greatly amusing them by relating little incidents of his travels in foreign lands. About the time their meal had begun, Uncle Peter, who had absented himself for some time, suddenly appeared on the scene, bearing a large platter of fried fish, which he had taken home and had prepared for the party.

After many expressions of thanks had been said, and Gerald had presented him with a quarter, the old darky bowed himself away, and the young people again took up their discourse, of which fish was the principal subject, when Gerald heightened the interest of the others by remarking in this wise:

“We think our lakes, rivers, and ponds abound with fish, but the quantity does not in the least compare with that of foreign countries; the Indian ocean, for instance, is perfectly alive with them, and the vessel in which I sailed cut its way through great shoals of these finny inhabitants.”

This reference to his travels was inopportune for Gerald, as Millie and Fred, who never tired of hearing him relate of them, commenced insisting at once upon him giving them another sketch.

“Tell us something about Bagdad, where Aladdin was given the wonderful lamp by the fairy,” vociferated Fred, in real boyish fashion, and Gerald, having brought about the subject, had to submit to their wishes with as good a grace as possible; Rosalind, too, expressed her solicitations by saying that she much preferred hearing one describe those things than to read of them.



"I fear you will be disappointed when it comes to listening to me, as my sister and brother greatly overrate my qualities of speech, or rather make me out presumedly a good story teller."

However, the brother and sister were not wrong in thinking such was the case, as was soon revealed by the interested attention of his hearers.

Bagdad, that old city of the far East, so renowned in fable, romance, and history, was brought forcibly to their mind's eye by the vivid picture Gerald drew of it, not omitting anything, but making the narration throughout full and replete with interest. The women of the Orient, their dress, manners, and, moreover, subordinate positions; how they were never permitted to go out unveiled, and how those of the wealthier class were always attended by a bodyguard of servants. He then related how the once large population of Bagdad had decreased, and now only amounted to about sixty thousand; out of these, twelve thousand were Jews, forty-five thousand followers of the Mohammedan religion, there being only about three thousand Christians. Then in his versatile manner he went on to describe the large caravans that almost daily could be seen bearing the merchandise from all parts of Europe; the patience and placidness of the camels as they toiled through the scorching heat of the sun, only resting long enough to feed upon a scanty shrub, said to be as bitter as the "apples of Sodom," then driven to the river to drink, after which they were put in the stable for a night, only to again begin their toilsome journey the following day. Other historical places were briefly de-



scribed, among the rest Babylon, that mysterious, silent city, which for four thousand years has slumbered. In regard to it he said, "Babylon is most truly a dead and buried city, with nothing to mark its resting place but the hill upon which it sat, and the relics of antiquity that the Arabs and treasure seekers from other lands are constantly extricating from its ruins."

And thus it was, while lingering under the influence of his charming voice, the auditors of Gerald were carried away from themselves by these graphic details relating to the land of the Orient. Especially did Rosalind forget everything else, while she sat spellbound listening as intently as she had done upon hearing her father describe his own experience while in heathen lands. No one else had ever so interested her since, and she felt as if she could listen to his soft flowing tones forever. Fishing in the afternoon became impossible, as the sun continued to shine so brilliantly—not a shadow having crossed its bright disk—hence the remainder of the day was spent in the manner just described, with no sound to break the stillness save that of Gerald's rich voice, as it rose and fell on the zephyr-like breeze. How peacefully happy had that day been to Rosalind, and how often in the future—when new sorrows that almost quenched her young life had come—did she recall this scene; the pond with its many depths, where shadowy forms of the little fish left long streaks of sunlight upon its surface as they scudded through the water; the eager faces of Fred and Millie, while listening to their brother's rehearsal of the many strange lands, and strange people that inhabited them.



So the afternoon glided quickly away, and it was with much regret that they saw "Old Sol" disappear behind the forest hills, warning them that their day's pleasure had ended; and as the twilight deepened, and the fire-flies drifted amongst the wild flowers, and an early moon rose and hung over the water like a shield of gold, the little party moved slowly and reluctantly towards their homes, separating at Miss Morton's gate—Rosalind to spend the remainder of the evening thinking and dreaming over the delightful day just passed, and Millie to return to her beautiful home and detail to her guest the day's happenings and descant upon the many charms of her new friend, Rosalind Morton.



## CHAPTER VII.

### ENTRE NOUS.

**I**T was almost eight o'clock when Millie and Gerald reached Ivy Crown, and as dinner was usually served at that hour, they made their way at once to their own apartments to prepare for meeting their guest in the dining-room. And right here it may be added that since Hetty had grown up and become a fashionable society leader, the good old time noontide dinner had given place to luncheon, while dinner had taken the place of the old-fashioned supper.

This arrangement had not been altogether agreeable to Grandmother Underwood, or the Judge, both of whom rather preferred the primitive mode of serving meals; but in this, as in everything else, the dominant will of the eldest daughter had asserted itself, consequently overruling the objection of the rest of the family.

Both the Judge and his mother were indulgent to the young people, and never happier than when engaged in doing something that would add to their comfort and pleasure.

The old lady, therefore, spent much of her time in the kitchen and pantry superintending the servants and devising some rare dish for the dinner, or dealing out sundry pickles, preserves and cold meats for luncheon, and it was through her efficient housewifery and unex-



ceptionable hospitality that the lovely old homestead was rendered doubly attractive to its many visitors, who came and went throughout the entire summer season.

And while Hetty and her lady guest lounged away the hours en deshabille, the grandmother attended to these duties, thus royally entertaining her family and friends.

Upon this evening, when Millie and Gerald entered the diningroom, they found her as usual sitting at the head of the table, dispersing her genial smiles and sumptuous hospitality around her, appearing truly, a "lady bountiful" in every sense of the word.

Fred having reached home an hour or so earlier, had not failed to have a famous fish fry added to the numerous other savory dishes. Nettie and Nellie immediately plied them with questions concerning their day's sport, whereupon Millie, in her graphic and enthusiastic style, described the day's doings, not omitting an account of Rosalind's bravery in handling the fish worms.

All were interested in Millie's talk, especially Mrs. Porter, who, though not appearing to listen, had not lost a word of what she had said about Rosalind Morton. "She is just the loveliest girl I ever saw, with such pretty blue eyes, that seem to have a light shining in their depths which I never saw in any one's eyes before; and, since I come to think of it, I suppose it is what the poets call 'soul illumined.'" This expression from Millie caused a smile all round, Gerald remarking in the meanwhile that he had no idea she was so sentimental.

"I am real jealous of that girl," chimed in Nettie, "and am sure I shall not like her the least bit, since Millie is so crazy about her."



“You ought to have gone with us and seen her for yourself; I guess you’d got as bad stuck on her as we are,” said Fred, who had up to this time remained silent.

“So I ought, but I am so afraid of the fish that I am sure I would have been miserable all day; but you are mistaken, Fred, in supposing, for a moment, that I would have gotten stuck on her, for no matter how pretty she is I could never like her if she is to come between Millie and myself, as it seems that she is doing.”

Millie hastened to facilitate matters by assuring Nettie of her everlasting devotion, and, as the dinner had now ended, placed her arm around her friend and asked her to walk into the grounds.

After this they all in like manner trooped out of the diningroom, with the exception of Fred and his grandmother. The old lady had asked him to remain, as she wished to speak to him, and when they were quite alone she said :

“Will you tell me, my boy, why it is you make use of such ugly expressions as you did to Nettie while at the table?”

But Fred could not for the life of him remember as to what his grandmother had reference, and, looking somewhat confused, he asked, “What did I say, granny? I am sure I don’t recollect.”

“Well, Freddy, it was this, and it was not the first time that I have heard you use the expression, but I do hope I will not hear it again. If your father had been at the table he would no doubt have sent you away or punished you otherwise, but, as he was not present, I feel it a duty to speak to you myself.”



Here Fred grew impatient, and interrupted her by saying, "Well, what is it, Granny? I don't see any use of keeping a fellow waiting all night."

A delicate flush rose to the old lady's face when she replied, "It was the slang phrase (stuck on her) which you used, and in connection with the name of the young lady, too; where did you learn such language?"

Upon hearing this Fred broke out into a peal of merry laughter, and said, "Why, Granny, there's nothing short about that word; all the swells I met last winter in Florida and New Orleans made use of it. Of course it is slang, but it is fashionable slang, Granny!"

"No matter, Freddie, how fashionable it is, I do not want my boy to pollute his lips by using it, for I tell you, dear boy, it is a very bad habit, and, no matter how fashionable, it is disgusting to people of good taste and refinement, and I therefore hope you will try to refrain from making use of such language again, especially when in the presence of ladies."

Fred appeared heartily ashamed, and said, repentantly, "I will do my best to break myself of it Granny, if you will forgive me this time."

"Certainly, Freddy, you are already forgiven," answered the fond old grandmother, kissing him affectionately.

When Gerald passed out of the diningroom on that evening it was with the intention of at once going to his own room for the purpose of writing some letters, but in the hall-way, just where the soft rays of moonlight were blending with the lamp light, Mrs. Porter was standing,



lingeringly. He spoke to her pleasantly, and would have passed on had she not stopped him by saying :

“Excuse me, Mr. Underwood, for interrupting you, but I wanted to inquire if your father is expected home to-night?”

This question was put in the most sang froid manner that one could possibly assume, but under this calm exterior there was a trembling of doubt and fear, hope and expectancy. How would he treat her? Would he ever allow himself to listen to her dulcet tones again, and believe the pretty little story she had to tell him in extenuation of her falsity? Would she ever again be capable of making him care for her? Almost breathlessly she waited for his answer to her question, which was only a method she had employed by way of drawing him into conversation with her, and, though his face did not change in expression, and his voice was pleasant when he replied to her, she felt intuitively that he understood her motive in making this inquiry concerning his father's return, which was only a prelude to the making-up of their former acquaintance.

However it might be, the woman had sufficient tact to continue her role, so she heard Gerald's reply apparently unmoved, “Father went to Lexington this morning, intending to return this evening, and, as the train is about due at Livingston, will possibly be home in a short time.”

Then, with the true courtesy of a Southern gentleman, he remembered that the lady was a visitor at his father's house, and it was his duty to show her kind attention.

“Will you come in the parlor and wait until father comes?” he asked, politely, offering his arm.



“I believe I will wait, as I wish to consult the Judge on a matter of business,” she replied, then hesitatingly added, “If you would not mind escorting me, I should prefer going into the grounds; it is so close in doors, and the night is so beautiful!”

“Certainly not, madame, I shall be pleased to escort you about the grounds, since you wish it.” And to any one not well versed in intonation of sound his voice would have indicated nothing more than an ordinary acquiescence to her request; otherwise there was a disinclination expressed on his part, while at the same time he offered to serve her.

But if the widow read this in his tone, she appeared perfectly unconscious of it, and went on talking in the most gracious manner, praising the beauty of the grounds, the attractiveness of the plan in which they were laid off, the statuary and fountains; all were of the most exquisite designs, and in her varied travels she had never seen any place half so beautiful as Ivy Crown.

Gerald listened with apparent interest to all her flattering comments, thanking her for her pretty compliments, and replying respectfully to all her questions, but not one feeling or emotion of what he had felt for her eight years prior to this interview was awakened within him. No, there was no rekindling of the old flame, not a spark remained, and to him the past was as dead as a past could be. His father's family had never known of this romance of his more youthful days, for their acquaintance had sprung up while he was attending college at Frankfort, and had ripened and matured into a betrothal.



Thus the two had parted, when Gerald went to Germany to complete his education—he with high hopes and expectations for the future, and she with her vows of constancy scarcely cold on her lips, ready to accept the first propitious offer of marriage, which proved to be that of Senator Porter.

And so it had all ended between them; hence it was with more disgust than anything else that he found this bona fide affair of his inexperienced boyhood brought face to face with him, by the original subject of it having presented herself at his home ostensibly as his sister's guest, but at the same time being perfectly aware of his presence there—wearing, too, the interesting garb of what is termed “widow's weeds,” and evidently expecting to reignite his former passion and resurrect the past. “No doubt,” he thinks, scornfully, “she has within her own mind pictured out how, upon meeting her again, I would fall upon my knees and plead with her to fulfill the vows of her maidenhood, and after much hesitation on her part she would at last blushing consent, and thus after a rehearsal of all the silly things I had said and done at the time I lived in a fool's paradise, our marriage would be consummated, which would be the sequel of our youthful romance.” A smile of derision curled his handsome lips as these thoughts crossed his mind, and he could hardly refrain from giving expression to them aloud, and adding that she would be as much the victim of imagination as the milkmaid (of whom he had read in the blue-back spelling book of his juvenile days) if she had supposed him to be the same devoted lover as of



eight years ago. But he was a gentleman, and came of a gallant and courtly race; hence, he crushed back these unuttered sentiments, and endeavored to appear interested in all she was saying. Again he recalled the fact that Mrs. Porter was an invited guest at his father's house, and happily none of the family knew her at that time, or of the heart struggle through which he passed at the hands of the woman, over whom he now knew himself to be the victor. So completely had he conquered his former feelings towards her, and so beneficial had been the lesson she had given him of the duplicity of which her sex could be capable, that he felt that he should feel grateful, rather than resentful, towards her. It hardly seemed possible for any one to so change in their regard towards another, and until this test had been put before him he was not cognizant of how complete had been the change. The lightest touch of her hand had once had the most magical effect, and her soft tones had thrilled him, and caused every fibre of his being to pulsate with the most passionate emotions.

But how different now; for had that soft, white hand, resting so confidently upon his arm, belonged to one of the Greek goddesses of the marble statuary around them, it could not have produced a chillier effect.

After having exhausted her words in extravagant praises of the house, grounds, statuary and fountains, Mrs. Porter became silent for a few moments, then reopened the conversation by saying: "You do not know how much I have desired to see you again, for I have something that I wish to say to you—some explanations to make—which I have never had the opportunity of making since."



But before she could proceed further, Gerald stopped her by saying pleasantly, but firmly, "Pardon me, Mrs. Porter, for interrupting you, but I do not deem explanations concerning what may have occurred during our former acquaintance necessary. The past is dead and buried. Then why wish to disinter it?"

"But, Ger"—Mr. Underwood, she corrected—"it is not always best to let misunderstandings and hard feelings remain, when a few words would suffice to throw a different light on the subject altogether. So please listen to me while I tell you."

There was a tone of entreaty in the soft voice, and the eyes looking into his wore an expression of intense sadness while appealing to him in this wise. However, her words did not have the desired effect, for the stern set mouth, and calm expression of the eyes, showed Gerald Underwood to be unmoved in his determination that he would not listen to extenuations or remonstrances on her part, with a view of bringing about a reconciliation, or, rather, renewal of former relations. Moreover, his words, as well as his expression of countenance, warned her of the uselessness of her task, when, in a calm, even tone, he said:

"You are mistaken, madam, by thinking for a moment that I entertain for you unkind feelings regarding the past, or in any way have misunderstood your motives. In securing your present well being, you certainly acted wisely, and I have to congratulate you upon exercising so much common sense. And now we will drop this subject altogether, and never uproot it again, as it belongs



entirely to the past, and has been so nearly obliterated from my memory that it only seems a vague dream."

They were walking slowly down the avenue of Junipers that led in the direction of the fountain and grotto, situated in a remote part of the grounds, and when he had finished speaking they had stopped amongst the classically arranged statuary that stood like ghostly sentinels around the fountain, as if holding guard over this lovely and sequestered spot. Mrs. Porter did not reply; for once in her life she felt herself outwitted, and Gerald, by way of calling her attention to the works of splendid art by which they were surrounded, said:

"These symbols of antiquity are some of my importations from the Orient; this in particular I prize greatly from the fact of having had it patterned from the original one excavated from the ruins of Babylon," indicating a dancing faun of much beauty, "and this is another facsimile of Eastern antiquity," he continued, coming close to the three hideous faces of the furies, which appeared more grotesque than ever, when compared with the symmetry of the faun.

A slight but perceptive shiver passed over the beautiful woman when these faces, so symbolical of all the evil passions, grouped together and separated by serpents that were wound around the head of each and tied in knots below their horrible angular chins, confronted her. And no wonder she shuddered while viewing these sculptured monstrosities of ugliness, for nothing could have appeared more unpleasant to the eye than did that masterpiece of workmanship, with the shifting rays of moonlight falling upon it.



"I see you do not admire my furies," said Gerald, with a light laugh, "so I will show you my Psyche and Cupid," leading her nearer the fountain where these two heathen divinities were represented as rising from the water. And here, too, was a deviation from the original beauty of the mythical god and goddess, for while the head and shoulders were that of Psyche, the body was that of a huge reptile, coiled around the little blind god, from whom he appeared trying vainly to escape. Mrs. Porter attempted a little laugh, after studying the peculiar design, and said:

"Your idea of mythology seems to have been greatly exaggerated upon having this reproduced. What a queer design, and what could have ever suggested it?" she asked, sarcastically.

"It was fashioned after my own model, and came over the sea with me," he replied, in the same calm, indifferent tone.

He did not appear to have noticed the touch of sarcasm in her speech; at the same time becoming more pointed and satirical in his own remarks.

"There is no doubt but they are all fine works of art, but I must admit to the fact that I have never felt much interest in heathen deities, not having sufficient imagination to idealize them; therefore, I had much rather hear a description of some of your practical experiences while abroad than to see all the statuary in the world; and, according to Millie's statement, it seems that you were kind enough to entertain the fishing party with graphic accounts of the life and habits of the Orient. I crave the same boon."



“I should like to grant you this, Mrs. Porter, and will at some future time; but you will have to excuse me this evening, as I am under promise to write some letters for father, which should have been written to-day.”

They had turned from the fountain, and were then retracing their steps up the broad walk that was overshadowed by dense boughs of evergreens, which swayed gently to the music of the evening breeze, seeming to whisper of lovers' vows softly spoken upon just such moonlit, harmonious nights, when all nature was attuned to poetry and romance.

But if the beautiful widow had expected these scenes to inspire within the heart of her old lover an echo of the past, she was doomed to the most bitter disappointment, for still his tone and manner betokened the most perfect indifference, and his face also expressed the same to the uttermost degree.

And tho' the future held out many possibilities to her, she was convinced more than ever of the uselessness of attempting at present to re-ignite the old flame. She was thinking thus, and trying to decide on some plan for the future, when something occurred to change the current of her thoughts and fill her mind with the most abject terror, for suddenly the face and form of an object presented itself to view, spectral and weird in appearance, as seen in the uncertain and shifting moonbeams, yet nevertheless fearfully uncanny to the beholder, for transient and sudden as it had dawned upon her vision, its image did not fail to leave upon her memory a horrible impress; and for weeks afterwards she could recall, with a



sickening shudder, the haggard face, deep-set eyes, and claw-like hands that were reached defiantly out towards her, altogether making a picture not easily erased; and tho' it was hard to decide within her own mind whether she had really seen this object or her imagination had played her false, it was however sufficiently distinct to have the effect of throwing her into a fainting fit, thus making it necessary for Gerald to bear her in his arms up the stairs to Henrietta's room, where, after laying her on a couch, he left her and went in search of his sister, whom he fortunately met in the hallway, and in this wise explained the situation:

"I was just going in search of you, Hettie, to ask you to go to Mrs. Porter, who is in your room in a dead swoon, which was brought on by a little fright she sustained while in the grounds."

Then stepping nearer, he added something sotto voce. Whatever that something was, it caused Henrietta's face to turn several shades paler and an inarticulate sound to escape her lips; then she hastened her steps in the direction of her room.

She was just in the act of entering, when she was again accosted by Gerald, who said briefly, "Do not let any one else hear of this; neither is it necessary to let her know that you are aware of what has occurred this evening," nodding in the direction of the fainting woman. He then strode hurriedly out, going in the direction of where the mysterious visitant had made its appearance.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### ROSALIND VISITS IVY CROWN

“Your eyes are stars of morning;  
Your lips are crimson flowers.”

THREE days after the fishing excursion, Miss Morton, senior, and her niece received a cordial invitation from Ivy Crown, asking them to spend the day. But other duties calling the grand aunt at home on that day made it necessary for Rosalind to go alone.

Upon arriving at the hospitable mansion, Millie was the first to greet her, who ran out to the carriage, and, kissing her affectionately, exclaimed:

“So you have come at last, have you? Gerald and myself have been on the lookout for you for the last hour,” she added, as she led her up the steps.

At this Rosalind’s cheeks suffused with blushes, for she had already perceived Gerald only a few feet away, and felt sure that he had heard Millie’s words. However, he did not seem in the least abashed, and continued to advance towards the two. Holding out his hand in a kindly greeting, he said:

“Allow me, also, to welcome you to Ivy Crown!”

And while her little hand fluttered into the firm, white palm, his eyes looked into hers, meeting the clear bright orbs with a glance of undoubted admiration—for none could have looked into that pure, guileless face, without



admiring it. And so it was with Gerald Underwood; though he had lost faith in woman, and ceased to worship at beauty's shrine, still it was a pleasure to him to know this high-souled, lovely girl, whom the world had not yet spoiled, and in whom he had, in spite of himself, become more interested than he would have been willing to admit.

From a recess of a bay window in the library, and screened by some potted plants, Mrs. Porter had watched the meeting between the trio, and jealously noted the kindly and genial manner in which Gerald welcomed the pretty girl to his home. She had seen more, too, as Gerald's glance had not escaped her, or had Rosalind's rosy blushes. Laura Porter was a woman keenly observant to things in general, but when anything personally concerned her own interest was taking place right under her eyes, it assumed double proportions.

"Great heavens!" she exclaimed, under her breath, while her heart beat with the wildest fears, "can it be possible that he is interested in that chit of a girl, who has nothing to recommend her but her pretty face, and only the daughter of an impoverished minister? What fools men are, to let every girl who happens to be a little above the average in beauty, make them believe they are angels. But it matters not how much she has attracted him by her pretended artlessness, she shall never win him, for I am determined never to submit to that if I have to bring all the powers of heaven and hades to bear against it—for he is mine by the first rights, and shall never become the husband of another woman; for, whether through good or evil, I will prevent it, and place a barrier



as wide as the sea between them rather than to allow him to belong to another.”

None would have believed it possible for this beautiful woman, with such a languid air and soft, magical eyes, to be capable of expressing such vindictiveness of character as she had, while all unobserved the little by-play had come under her notice; and while these thoughts were passing through her brain her eyes gleamed with a fierce light and her face grew deathly white.

Rosalind's lovely countenance had dawned fully upon her, and though she had expected to see a girl pretty—perhaps a little above the average—she was in no way prepared to behold one so striking in appearance, for such a face and form as this girl possessed were rarely seen. The broad white brow and beautiful dark-hued pansy eyes; the intellectual cast of features, with all their refined effeminacy, and, moreover, the delicate tho' well developed form, the symmetrical curves of which were brought out to the very best advantage by the well-fitting attire of soft mull; truly the girl appeared the picture of ideal loveliness. In the meanwhile Rosalind, all unaware of the scrutiny she had been undergoing, had been escorted by the brother and sister to the front parlor, and given a seat by one of the long French windows where she could view the ethereal beauty of the magnificent grounds. And while she sat there feasting her eyes on all the luxuriant verdure and bloom that environed her, a new sense of joy came into her heart; a thankfulness of spirit, to which she had been a stranger for many months, took possession of her, bringing with it a feeling of blissful content.



“After all, what a beautiful world is this!” she mentally enunciated, as she gazed about her, bewildered by the scene that arose before her. When she had last looked upon Ivy Crown winter had robbed it of all its bloom; what must it have appeared to her at the season when the grounds were a blaze of roses, scarlet and pink geraniums, and luxuriant jessamine and honeysuckle? Then, too, all the landscape around was bare of its verdure; now it was at its brightest and freshest. The densely foliaged forest, the wide meadows, showing their luminous tints in the radiant sunshine, were all grand beyond expression. Rosalind saw all this with emotions of exquisite delight, and while her eyes wandered amongst these enticing beauties, involuntarily they rested upon the little rustic arbor in which she had sat down to rest upon her first visit to Ivy Crown, when the horrible creature had appeared before her, causing her such a terrible fright. Again she shuddered while recalling it, and turned from the window to find herself alone.

Millie had left her to go in search of Nellie and Nettie for the purpose of introducing them, and during this time her thoughts had roved back over the past few months.

However, she was not left long to recount the brief but seemingly interminable interview she had held with the mysterious creature, for at about this time Gerald’s pleasant voice brought her back to the agreeable present.

“How is it that I find you quite alone, Miss Morton? One would have thought that Millie would not have left you for a moment, judging from the persistent watch she has been keeping for the last two hours.”



Rosalind's countenance lighted up immediately, and she answered, cheerfully, assuring him that Millie had only left her for a few moments to look up the other young ladies. "She is anxious that I should meet Miss Rhea, and I am equally as eager to make her acquaintance," she added, smilingly.

"In that case she is liable to be absent for some time—that is, if she waits for the young ladies' toilets to be made; so, with your permission, I will try to entertain you until she again puts in an appearance."

"Thank you; I shall be pleased to have you talk to me," she replied, simply.

And so it happened, when, in the course of half an hour, Millie returned to the parlor, accompanied by Mrs. Porter, Nellie, and Nettie, they found the two conversing in an animated tone; and again a jealous pang caused the heart of the pretty widow to palpitate rapidly, but she crushed back these inner feelings behind a mask of smiles, and her greeting to Rosalind was by far more friendly than that of the others; for while Nettie and Nellie only bowed in acknowledgement of Millie's introduction, this lady shook hands with Rosalind, and said, in the softest, sweetest tone, "We are all most happy to welcome you, Miss Morton, and trust that your visit to Ivy Crown may be as pleasant as ours has been."

"I really cannot understand how it could be possible for any one not to enjoy a visit here," replied Rosalind, readily, at the same time looking admiringly at the pretty woman, not failing to note with what graceful ease she had sank into a chair near her side.



“No, it does not seem possible that one would ever weary of looking upon the beauties of this lovely home; however, it does not suffice to drive away the ennui from one of its inmates. Yes, it is true, Miss Morton,” she added, in reply to Rosalind’s questioning look, “that Mr. Gerald Underwood is suffering from a severe attack of that malady, and had the disease been of a contagious nature, it would have long since communicated itself to the rest of us; but since your coming seems to have had upon him a cheering effect, there are yet some hopes of his recovery.”

Mrs. Porter’s words, though sounding natural to the others, had an unmistakable ring of sarcasm in them which Gerald alone understood, and as she thus ingeniously uttered them, a frown of displeasure ruffled his handsome brow; but, quickly bethinking himself, he hastened to say:

“I think I know of something that will act as a preventive to the infection, should there be danger of any of you contracting it.”

“Well, do let us hear what it is,” cried Millie, impatiently.

“Certainly; there is a camp-meeting in progress about twenty miles from here, and if you all would like to go, we will do so.”

“Oh! that would be glorious,” chorused Millie, Nettie, and Nellie.

“But you should not be too hasty in your conclusions; you have not heard yet what kind of conveyance would necessarily be used for the occasion; perhaps that would not be so readily approved,” said Gerald, laughing.



“Why don’t you tell us what you are driving at and not tease so much?” pouted Millie.

“Well, I will—it is this: there is but one way that we could travel the route that leads to the camp-grounds, and that is in a four-horse wagon, as the roads in some parts are very rough, and were we to start in carriages, would no doubt be stalled before making half the distance. But we can have the wagon well covered with hay; and to appear modern, we will call it a hay-ride.”

“That will be delightful,” proclaimed Millie; “and such a novelty,” emphasized Mrs. Porter.

“But, Gerry, what time will we start? You know the fashion for hay-riding is at night, and we couldn’t go and return twenty miles in one evening,” said Millie, anxiously.

“Of course not; we will start by daylight on the morning we determine upon going, and reach the camp-grounds for the eleven o’clock service. Then we will have our fashionable hay-ride coming home, as it will possibly be after midnight when we arrive.”

“How romantic! I always enjoy anything where there is hay about; it smells so fresh and green; and I shall almost imagine myself Maud Muller when I am being tossed about in the new mown hay. Don’t you think me appreciative of sentiment and poetry, Gerald?” said Nellie, in a tone of mock gravity.

“I suppose your version of the poet’s idealized maiden reaches about as near it as any one’s, at this age, Miss Nellie; but permit me, however, to say that you have the advantage over the original Maud Muller in more than



one way—for, while you ride on the hay, she did the haying; and, if I rightly understand the poet, only one came a wooing, while, on the other hand, you have two suitors, who will doubtless sit on each side of you during your ride.”

Upon this they all laughed, while Nellie endeavored to hide her blushes behind a fan of the most delicate tissue.

“We will have to start at about four o’clock A. M. to reach Rocky Hill in time for the morning service; hence you ladies will have to forego your late morning nap,” explained Gerald, looking from one to the other; then, as if by the merest chance, his eyes rested upon Rosalind, and he added, “I hope, Miss Morton, that you, too, will find it agreeable to make one of the party of our so-termed hay-ride.”

“I cannot say positively until I have spoken to Aunt Vilinda, though I should very much enjoy it I know,” Rosalind replied.

“Why, of course you will; I will go over to see Miss Vilinda myself and ask her permission; and when I tell her that Gerry has gotten this up in honor of her lovely and charming niece, I am sure she will consent,” put in Millie, concernedly.

“What’s the rumpus?” inquired Fred, at this time appearing in their midst, accompanied by the two cadets. However, before any one found time to reply to his query, he had spied out Rosalind, and exclaimed, vociferously, “Oh! here she is now; I am so glad to see you, Miss Rosalind. I was just telling these fellows what a dead swell you are at fishing, and promised to get you to show them how to handle a rod.”



Here the boy was interrupted by Gerald coming forward, saying:

“You forget, my lad, that these gentlemen have never met Miss Morton. You should, therefore, have introduced them.” Then, turning to Rosalind, he said:

“Miss Morton, allow me to present to you Messrs. Townsend and Courts.”

The young men both cast admiring glances towards the new guest, then, simultaneously, as if moved by the same impulse, turned their eyes upon Miss Stevenson. But this young lady was either so sure of their undying devotion, or else too much occupied with thoughts of the coming event to have noticed their admiration; and, as soon as they had taken their seats, commenced to impart to them, in her impartial manner, the contemplated amusement just being discussed.

“It will be a regular lark,” declared Henry.

“Won’t it, though!” chimed Fred.

“Yes, just awfully jolly,” enunciated Edwin.

Then they all laughed hilariously.

“I was never at a camp-meeting in my life, and have no idea what the people do while there. Will some one kindly inform me?” said Nellie, looking innocently around her.

“Certainly, Miss Nellie, if my meagre knowledge will be of any service to you, it will be most gladly given, as I have once or twice in my life chanced upon a campground. In the first place, it is a series of meetings, conducted similar to all revivals of religion, where they have a mourners’ bench and pray and sing and shout. But, in-



stead of making daily trips from their homes, a number of people build themselves comfortable little cabins, and move their families and such furniture as they deem indispensable. Here they take up their abode as long as the meeting lasts, doing their cooking over what is termed camp fires, with cooking utensils which can be suspended above them. Thus a large amount of provisions are cooked each day for their own use and the visiting congregation; and hundreds of strangers are entertained in the most kindly and hospitable manner by these campers; at least, this has been my personal experience with meetings of this kind. But the settlement in which I attended them heretofore was far different from Rocky Hill, which happens to be a little farther removed from civilization; or, in other words, it is in a locality called Coon Range, a backwoods part of the State, where you will see many strange and, I may add, outlandish styles of dress and headgear among the ladies—and, were you all not so well-bred, it might be necessary to admonish you to control your risibles, for when you witness fashions the most antiquated, and hear the drollery of speech which characterizes the natives of Coon Range, you will be greatly tempted to laugh.”

Gerald, having ended his explanation to Nellie, turned to Rosalind, interrogating her thus:

“Have you ever attended a camp-meeting, Miss Morton?”

“Oh, yes, very often; papa assisted in conducting such meetings, and I frequently went with him.”

Then Millie, who was intently listening, said, “Do



tell us something about them, Rosalind. Did you really ever sleep on a camp ground?"

"Yes, upon many different occasions, and found myself as comfortable as one would have wished. The people were very kind and hospitable, tho' generally poor," Rosalind replied, without volunteering further information.

"Truly the poor are God's people," repeated Gerald, reverently.

At the sound of his voice Rosalind started involuntarily, while her cheeks paled and flushed rapidly, for something in his deep tones touched a tender chord in her memory, calling up in vivid colors the cherished past. She had heard her father so often repeat that text, and Gerald's voice had sounded so like his, that it was all that she could do to keep back the tears. However, she quickly recovered her composure, tho' it cost her an effort to do so, and when a few minutes later Henrietta entered she was smiling naturally and listening to Fred while he pictured the fun of their forthcoming hay-ride.

It was then near about the noon hour—the time when the elder sister usually put in her first appearance for the day. It was customary for this young lady to breakfast in her own room in negligee, and to remain there until just before the bell would ring for luncheon, hence no one expressed any surprise at her tardiness. Millie hastened to introduce Rosalind as soon as the sister came into their midst, and Hetty acknowledged the introduction with a haughty bow, after which she took the trouble of addressing to her a few conventional remarks. Then,



in answer to the bell, they all filed into the spacious diningroom to partake of the bountiful luncheon. Millie and Gerald both escorted Rosalind to the hospitable board, where she was received by the grandmother with a cordial hand shake.

“I am glad to know you, Rosalind; sit here by me, and tell me how your aunt is getting along in health now,” said the old lady, motioning the visitor to a seat beside her, at the same time giving her an admiring look. And Rosalind, feeling quite at ease by the kindly reception, answered all of the grandmother’s questions, and told her what a nice garden her aunt had in prospect, thus directing her attention to her chiefly during the meal. In the meanwhile Millie introduced the subject of the camp-meeting, upon which all had something to say; hence before they left the table arrangements had been made with the grand-dame that a large hamper of provisions be gotten in readiness by the day after the morrow, the time specified for their going; also that an early breakfast be prepared for them on the day appointed.

The Judge was not at home, therefore Gerald was called upon to do the honors of host while luncheon was being served, which he accordingly accomplished with as much grace as if the duties were habitual to him. While the camp-meeting was being discussed he turned to Rosalind, saying:

“You must not fail to go with us to Rocky Hill, as the view of the surrounding country will amply reward you for your long ride. We will pass through some of the most rugged and picturesque parts of the State, and the



people whom we will see on the camp grounds will also be perfect curiosities."

"And the place of which you speak is in Kentucky; how is it possible when every one calls this God's country?" said Nellie, who had overheard Gerald's remarks.

"It is nevertheless God's country, though perhaps not so highly favored as this part," replied Gerald, pleasantly. Henrietta, who had not been present when Gerald had suggested the trip, looked a little inquiringly upon hearing their talk, not deigning, however, to ask any questions. Mrs. Porter seeing her dilemma, kindly came to the rescue by explaining what was in prospect, then asked:

"Don't you think you would enjoy it, Hetty?"

"Not in the least; nothing would suffice to induce me to go jolting over those rocks and hills. No, I wouldn't go for anything."

"Yes you would, sister; if Mr. Barton was here and wanted you to go you would be as flip about it as any of us," said Fred, who had been remarkably quiet since coming to the table.

"But Mr. Barton will not be back from Louisville until Sunday, and were he here would not advise any of us to take such a tiresome trip; so don't be too smart, Freddy," retorted Hetty, tartly.

"Well, you needn't get sour about it, for Mr. Barton is not needed in this gang, or you, either, and don't you forget it," rejoined the boy, with equal spirit.

Just as they all were leaving the diningroom, Mrs. Porter challenged Gerald for a game of chess; Henrietta



and Nellie betook themselves to their room, leaving Millie, Nettie, and Rosalind in the parlor to amuse each other as they saw fit.

“Rosalind, please play something,” said Millie, opening the grand piano, and placing some music near to hand. Rosalind arose at once, and, seating herself at the piano, ran her fingers nimbly over the keys, while, in answer to her light touch, there came a medley of soft sweet sounds. “What a lovely tone has this instrument,” she exclaimed, mentally comparing it with the sharp sounding notes of the one in her Aunt Vilinda’s parlor. Then, with a sweeping prelude, she executed a most difficult piece of instrumental music, composed by one of the old masters. This being finished, she sang the beautiful, but simple little ballad, “Why Do Summer Roses Fade.” The clear, rich voice rang out melodiously, rising and falling in rippling waves on the perfumed atmosphere, and in soft, sweet cadence, floating into the library where sat Mrs. Porter and Gerald over the chess board.

“A very pretty little song and very well rendered,” remarked the lady, on seeing that Gerald was listening with more interest to the singing than he was giving to the game—forgetting, entirely, that it was his move.

“Yes, very,” he answered, “and it is rarely ever that we hear a voice so well trained, and yet so free from affectation. If there is anything I admire, it is a natural rendering of vocal music.”

It was very hard for the widow to sit there and hear Gerald praising Rosalind’s voice; but she had too much



tact to betray her feelings. In decoying him from the presence of this girl, she felt that she had won a victory over her, and it would not do to overthrow this feeling by giving up to jealousy, hence she sweetly sanctioned Gerald's opinion in regard to Rosalind's singing. As to Millie and Nettie, they were completely charmed with the song, and begged for another and another, until a number had been sung, each expressive of that same pathos and sweet melody. And so it was that the afternoon was whiled away. Fred and the two young men had equipped themselves immediately after luncheon and gone out bird-shooting, hence the three girls had spent the afternoon comparatively alone, and Rosalind had felt no embarrassment while singing, supposing Millie and Nettie were her only auditors.

And as the shadows lengthened across the lovely grounds Peter and the antiquated carriage came to fetch Rosalind back to Morton Place. After the good-byes had been said and Rosalind was speeding along on her homeward way, she again contemplated upon the beauty and elegance of Ivy Crown. But it did not make her less content with her own home, though, by comparison, everything appeared plainer than ever at Morton Place, still she had too much of her father's noble spirit to indulge in any useless regrets that she, too, was not thus surrounded. She had never been discontented with her lot during her father's lifetime, when it was still more lowly, and now she breathed a prayer of gratitude that she had fallen into such good hands and found a home among such genuine people.

Thus far, Millie had proven the ideal friend of whom



she had formerly dreamed and pictured in her imagination, and Gerald had supplanted the hero of her romantic fancies, for in him her beau ideal of a grand and noble man had been fully realized. How much she admired him, and though she would not dare admit it even to herself; thought of him with that worshipful affection only experienced once in the lifetime of woman.

The girl blushed deeply when she found herself thinking of him and recalling his every word, look, and smile, and the many little delicate attentions he had shown her on that day. Then came the reaction, and she told herself that she had no right to remember these things in this way, or attach any importance to his manner towards her. After all, he had only treated her as he would have treated any other stranger guest at his father's house. If he had been a little more attentive to her than the rest, it was because of this reason.

"How foolish of me to treasure up the thought that he has shown any preference for my society, when it was only his courtesy that caused him to do so," she soliloquized, sadly, as she approached her home.

But, try as she would, she could not cease to think of him; an invincible power seemed to force his image before her, and when she fell asleep that night she dreamed of him.

Again she heard his deep, mellow voice, and again she was under the soothing influence of his presence, looking into his handsome face and listening to him detailing some incident so fraught with interest, and in her dreams, as in her waking hours, he appeared to her the incarnation of glorious manhood.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CAMP-MEETING.

[T was early morning on the following Wednesday when the party from Ivy Crown, accompanied by Rosalind, found themselves comfortably ensconced in the hay wagon, winding slowly along a lofty road overlooking the beautiful bluegrass country.

Right down below them, eastward, and just visible through the tall trees of the distant forest, a brilliant sun was rising, while northward rose a range of hills, fringed along with wood, terminating in the west in far altitudes of mountainous regions.

“How lovely!” was the simultaneous exclamation, after all had for some moments contemplated the scene.

“It is an old but very true saying that nothing in art can compare with nature,” remarked Gerald, thoughtfully.

Then, as the outlook drifted from scene to scene, the conversation glided on, assuming a lighter tone, and all went as merrily as a marriage bell.

By ten o'clock they were nearing their destination, and as they came within three or four miles of Rocky Hill the ruggedness of the road was indeed woful. But they all seemed to enjoy the jolt and jostle of the wagon, and laughed heartily while making every effort to keep their equilibrium. Especially did Fred and black Jim find



these sudden evolutions amusing, and allowed themselves to be tossed and tumbled about at random, half buried in the sweet scented new mown hay.

But latterly, when the wagon became almost capsized, the wheels on one side resting on a huge rock and engulfed in a deep gutter on the other, and they all lost their balance and fell downward in a promiscuous heap, their merry laughter was succeeded by terrified shrieks from the ladies and sundry exclamations of alarm from the young men.

In the confusion that followed, Mrs. Porter caught Gerald's arm, and begged pathetically that the ladies would be allowed to alight from the vehicle, but he assured her it was entirely unnecessary.

"This is the worst part of the road over which we will have to travel, as we are nearly in sight of the camp ground," he added, then got out to assist the driver in removing the wheel from its elevated position. The ladies had just time to adjust their disarranged toilettes and smooth their disheveled locks, when it was announced that they had reached Rocky Hill.

Accordingly the awning which had protected them from the hot sun was raised, disclosing to their curious eyes a novel and picturesque sight. They beheld themselves in a dense wood, in the midst of which were congregated an immense number of people, while ranged around and tied to every available limb were horses, mules, and many specimens of the old-fashioned donkey.

A large number of vehicles of every description were blocking up the passage that led up to the stand where



the services were conducted. This proved to be a large shed, with long rows of rudely constructed seats, which were being rapidly filled by the constantly increasing crowd. Situated a short distance from this rustic temple were a series of small buildings, some of which were composed of broad plank, while others represented the typical "pioneer log cabin." And still further removed could be seen the smoke of camp fires, over which were suspended pots and kettles of every description. Grouped around these fires and the doors of the tents were women and children of all ages.

As our party made their way through this vast assemblage and entered the Tabernacle there was a great stir and commotion among the congregation; every head was turned, and some at the farther end of the building stood up, craning their necks to get a better view of the new comers, whose handsome appearance and stylish dress betokened them strangers in that remote part of the world.

The minister had arisen, and was giving out the first stanzas of the opening hymn, but amid the confusion caused by the entrance of the party the quavering voice of the old man was completely lost. He stopped, and looking reproachfully around the eager, curious throng, said:

"Will some of the brethren please find seats for these fine ladies? As for the men, they can look out for themselves."

Upon the delivery of this rather cutting speech there was a general uprising of the men until two long benches had been almost vacated; hence the ladies (who had all



flushed hotly at this crude rebuke of the minister) in a confused kind of way took their seats, while their escorts remained standing.

In a few minutes, however, one of the natives of Rocky Hill came up to them, and in a good-natured manner said, "Set down, you fellows, set down; hits our doty to comodate strengers, and we want you to be cumfutable."

"But we do not wish to deprive any one of their seats and can very well stand up," replied Gerald, politely.

"Wal, as fer as weuns is consarned, we hev our tints here and can go set in them hif we wants to. I tell you, Mister, youens is plum welcome to that ar bench."

Gerald thanked the man in behalf of all the gentlemen, ending the colloquy by accepting the seats, thus ridding himself of the attention of the gaping multitude. To say the least, the situation had been embarrassing to all the party, there having been no further attempt to continue the services, which their entrance had apparently interrupted, for, not until every one had become seated and the curiosity of the people somewhat appeased, did the minister recommence giving out the hymn; then, after looking around in the same solemn manner for some moments, in long-drawn syllables he continued :

"There—is—a—fountain—filled—with—blood—drawn—from—Immanuel's—veins."

And the people sung in the same drawling tone, accompanied by a prolonged nasal sound impossible to describe. Gerald found it a hard task to keep the more giddy members of the company from giving vent to their



amusement and laughing outright; especially did he admonish Millie to keep quiet, and strove to impress upon her the serious fact of how ill-bred it would appear to laugh at these poor, ignorant people, who had never known anything but poverty and toil. As to Nettie and Nellie, they did not dare look at each other, or either exchange glances with Henry and Edwin, knowing full well such would have ended in a general outburst of their stifled merriment. Rosalind having been accustomed to such people all her life, remained reverently attentive, making a few ineffectual attempts to join the singers; and so they all sat preserving the most respectful silence. At last the song ended, and the old minister raised his withered hands and, in the most solemn tones possible to be imagined, said, "Let us pray." The prayer was a long petition that the camp-meeting at Rocky Hill camp-grounds might be the greatest outpouring of spiritual grace that had ever been known, and that sinners might be convicted and mourners converted until a mighty shout would go up from that sin-infected congregation daily—yea, hourly—of hallelujah! hallelujah to the lamb! in whose blood their guilt had been washed away. And as the prayer continued the long drawn words and phrases increased, while other voices joined in, until the noise became uproarious. Gerald sat between Rosalind and Millie, which gave him the opportunity of observing the effect this excitement had upon the two. Rosalind, so forcibly reminded of the dead past while listening to this stereotyped prayer, wept softly, while Millie had grown very pale and was trembling visibly.



The thought that he had caused these young, innocent girls to weep was painful to Gerald, and he sincerely regretted having been instrumental in their coming under such influences. He felt confident that Millie had never committed an act that could be termed a sin in her life; and yet she appeared to be aroused to a consciousness of guilt by coming in contact with such. He therefore chided himself severely upon witnessing their emotion, and again told himself that it was very wrong in him to have brought his innocent-minded sister under the influence of this, nothing more or less than animal excitement; and Rosalind, too, had been awakened to sad and painful recollections, and he inwardly wished that he had never heard of Rocky Hill, for of all things in the world, a woman's tears was the most sorrowful sight to him. He felt that it was his duty to take them away at once, and would have done so but for the fear of causing another sensation. At last the prayer (which had been more noteworthy for its many words and repetitions than anything else) was ended, and after the amens had sounded and resounded, echoed and re-echoed through the vast throng, Gerald proposed to the two girls that they would go into the open air; but Millie refused downright, saying she "was very much interested and did not wish to leave." Rosalind also assured him that she felt quite comfortable, hence he could do nothing more. During this interlude, another minister had risen, who was as remarkable for his youth as the former for his years, and whose towering height and angular form made him appear a curious spectacle, indeed. However, his unprepossessing person



did not place any obstacle in the way of his religious zeal, or hinder it from asserting itself. Therefore, when he raised his lank form to its fullest height, and read his text in sharp, distinct tones, every eye was fastened upon him, and a silence as profound as death reigned supreme. “And he spake unto them a parable, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? and he said, This will I do: I will tear down my old barns, and build greater; and there I will bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, thou hast much good laid up for many years; take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?”

With the most marked emphasis and in the most deeply impressive manner did the young divine read the foregoing lesson, then, raising himself still higher, he proclaimed, in denunciatory tones:

“And thus it is with the rich man of to-day, he hoardeth up his wealth, while his fields are laden with grain, and his trees with fruit, and his abundance is such that he has no place where to bestow it; so, likewise, he teareth away his old barns and buildeth new ones, and thus maketh room for his great abundance. And when he has everything stored away, he says unto his soul, Thou hast much good laid up; take thy ease—eat, drink, and be merry! But I say unto you, while this rich man sitteth at his feast, while sparkling wines fill his golden goblets,



and he is saying to his soul, Take thy ease, for thou hast much good laid up, long years of plenty are before thee, God will say unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall these things be which he has provided? Oh, sinner, why will ye not harken to the voice of the preacher, whom God has sent to warn you? Why will you live for this world only, when you might be doing something for God? Why will you not take of your abundance and give to the poor? Young man, and young woman, ye who have come here to-day with no other object in view than to gratify an idle curiosity, you who are rich in this world's goods, whose fathers have great stores of fruit and grain laid away, and who have said to their souls, take your ease, and have bedecked their children with fine clothes and fine jewels, remember that to-day you are on holy ground which has been dedicated to God. I want you to bow your proud heads in humility to that All-wise Being who is ready to pardon you and claim you for his children."

While the young minister spoke thus, he came down from the pulpit, and, with a few long strides, made his way through the crowded aisle within a few feet of where our party were seated, then, stopping directly opposite them, he continued:

"Ye of the rich, think of that eternity that awaits you; think of that worldly father, to whom God may even this night say, Thy soul is required of thee. Then what good would these things be that he has stored away? What a cry and beseeching for God's mercy upon the soul of that father would be heard from your proud lips that never was



heard before. But, too late; alas! too late; God would be deaf to your prayer, for that man had no need of God in this world, hence God will have no need of him in the next. His final doom will have already been pronounced: Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I never knew you."

And while this exhortation went on, louder and louder grew the voice of the gigantic young man, while faster and faster flew his pronunciations of doom on the heads of the sinner, and higher and higher he towered, his hands waving in wild gesticulations, his eye dilating, and his breath hissing hotly from his parched lips; and, while he reeled backward and forward in unison with his zealous expostulation, the congregation were becoming worked up, and some were shouting, some praying, and some trying to start a song. At last a female voice—much stronger than the rest—made itself heard above the prevailing confusion, with, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me," while, pitched from the very highest to the lowest key, other voices joined in, and still others, until it seemed that every one on the camp-ground was proclaiming these wonderful tidings; while rising above the voices of the singers could be heard that of the preacher, crying out, "Sinner, come to-day; now is the appointed time; now is the day of salvation!" And from every direction women and men were crowding forward to the mourners' bench, some rushing heedlessly along, throwing themselves upon the ground, while others were being led by their friends to the anxious seat.

By this time excitement had reached fever heat, and



the altar was literally crowded with mourners and zealous workers, who knelt by their friends, praying with them and speaking to them words of cheer and comfort. Then some one began to clap his hands and shout "glory," and still another and another, until the largest portion of that great multitude was shouting "glory to God" while they passed about to and fro, shaking hands and telling each other that their souls were happy. With the increasing excitement Millie had become more deeply impressed than ever, and at this juncture was sobbing violently, while Rosalind, without betraying any agitation, continued to weep silently. Gerald, finding it impossible to induce them to leave the stand, was obliged to endure the sight of their emotion as best he could. The solemn picture the young minister had painted had not been without its effect upon all, each being more or less impressed, but Millie had taken it to heart more than any of them, for it seemed that the sermon pointed directly to her father, and her thoughts were fixed on the subject of him while her tears continued to flow. However, at this moment something occurred to divert their minds from the intensity of thought and turn their solemnity into an opposite channel, as usual the ridiculous predominating.

Seated on the bench in front of Fred was a very corpulent woman of about fifty years of age, who had from the beginning of the excitement rocked herself back and forth, as if trying in this wise to invoke the spirit, when all of a sudden she straightened up, and throwing up her hands, gave a leap backwards over the bench, landing right in the midst of the Ivy Crown party.



“Glory! glory! glory!” she shrieked loudly, then subsided into a short silence, as if for the purpose of recovering breath, only to cry out that much the louder. With a renewal of these screams she commenced to beat the ground furiously, while every now and then the full force of her large hand would descend upon Fred, who attempted to move out of her reach, but in so doing his face received a sounding smack. At this unexpected turn of affairs a suppressed titter went the rounds of the little party, while Fred, red with anger, quitted his seat and beat a hasty retreat. And Gerald, somewhat amused, but more thoroughly disgusted, rose up, saying, “We had best get away from here as quickly as possible, for fear of sharing a like fate with Fred.”

To this they all readily agreed, and moved off in the most quiet manner, making their way immediately to the wagon and setting about preparations for serving their luncheon at once. For some little while all preserved a prudent silence as regarded the services, until Fred, unable to restrain his pent-up indignation towards the corpulent person longer, set the ball rolling by saying, “Well, that’s what I call a funny kind of worship—playing at leap frog and smashing a fellow’s face.”

At this they all laughed heartily, while Henry and Edwin joked the boy mercilessly, causing him to again walk away, leaving the others to continue to discuss the subject his words had introduced.

“It really appears that they made a target of us all, at whom they were at liberty to fire at any time it suited their convenience. For my part I do not see why that



preacher directed his remarks almost entirely to our party, unless he thought us a wicked looking set," said Edwin, making a comical grimace.

"But didn't he give it to us, though? I felt like sinking through the ground while he stood over us pronouncing upon our heads such an awful doom; it makes a fellow shake in his shoes to think about it," retorted Henry, in a half serious tone.

"I really can't see any sense in such worship, and think it perfectly barbarous, but I suppose it is intended for good, though I am not capable of judging whether it has that effect or not since this is my initiation into things pertaining to this mode of religion. I presume, Miss Morton, that you are very familiar with revivals of this kind?" said Mrs. Porter, with a meaning little smile playing about her perfect lips.

"Oh, yes, I frequently attended protracted and camp-meetings during papa's lifetime, but I do not think I ever saw as much excitement before; papa did not approve of it, and would make an effort to calm them down as soon as they would begin. He always told them the necessity of keeping orderly," replied Rosalind, without noticing the touch of sarcasm in the well-modulated tone of the widow.

"I wouldn't have cared if some one had been here to-day to keep order, especially when that old woman commenced her racket and tried to get up a scrap with me," replied Fred, coming up again in time to hear Rosalind's remark.

"Well, Fred, you must forgive the old lady, and don't



ridicule her any more; you must understand, my boy, that people in her condition are not conscious of their actions, therefore are not responsible," Gerald said, conciliatorily.

"But," persisted Fred, "if she had slapped your face and pounded you like she did me, you would have been more than apt to kick, too."

"Religious creeds are so diverse among the different nations of the globe that to one who rambles around the world they become an interesting study," said Gerald, ignoring Fred's last remark, and addressing himself to the company. "For instance, there are the Oriental Jews, who still hold to their faith of past ages, and on a certain day of every year go hundreds of miles to the tomb of their prophet, Ezra, to bemoan his death, this being one of their most sacred religious duties. It so happened that I was a witness to one of these strange ceremonies (which was altogether an accident on my part). While steaming on the river Tigris, towards Bagdad, we saw this mausoleum, which lies upon the river bank close to the water's edge. This happened to be a day of worship, and as our steamer was full of tourists, and our captain desirous of indulging us in everything pertaining to sight-seeing, we were accordingly landed at this point for the purpose of viewing this piece of antiquity, which is a large square hall, composed of brick work, and elevated about twenty feet from the ground. In the center of this is a great tombstone placed over the prophet's grave. Ranged along with their faces turned to the wall and their backs toward the grave, were Jews of all ages and both



sexes. They were hiding their faces, while some were praying, and others were shouting, gesticulating and crying aloud; and this prophet for whom they were mourning has been dead at least two thousand years. I have always had a great respect for religion, and to everything pertaining to holiness, but there are forms and ceremonies in every creed that I fail to understand, and which seem as absurd as these lamentations over a dead and gone prophet, whose soul has long since been transmitted into the keeping of an All-wise Creator."

There was a certain charm of intonation in Gerald's voice that so harmoniously blended with the reserve and dignity of his manner, and was so perfectly in keeping with the cast of his features and the expression of his eyes, that it was impossible for any one to listen to his grave, sweet tones, without feeling fascinated and profoundly interested; hence it was without jealousy that all of his gentlemen friends acknowledged him specifically their superior, or rather, as one endowed with higher gifts. But to Rosalind, he was not only a superior talker and possessed of greater knowledge than other young men whom she had met, but he was a very god amongst men, and in all the world she did not believe there was another such. Her father had appeared the embodiment of all that was grand and noble in man, and it had seemed to her impossible for any one else to ever compare with him in the least. In her eyes he alone had been imbued with so much knowledge, and innate goodness combined, and as she had believed in the perfection of that father, so she believed in Gerald. Hence she was never happier



than when listening to him—rarely ever advancing an idea unless personally addressed, never losing the lightest syllable that fell from his lips. Bagdad had been the theme of many a story her father had told her, and to hear Gerald's reference to it, her ideas of the two became more closely associated than ever. All those landmarks of antiquity had been traversed by both of these men so identical in her life—the former to whom her memory clung so tenderly, the latter whose image was always before her. While she was thus thinking, all unconsciously, her blue eyes were fixed upon Gerald, and into their depths had crept an expression of that worshipful feeling with which she had become to regard him, when suddenly she remembered where she was, and that there were others around. Shifting her glance from one to the other, she encountered Mrs. Porter looking at her, and upon her lips there played a sardonic smile.

By this time black Jim and the driver had brought from the wagon the large hamper of appetizing eatables that had been so carefully put together by the indulgent grandmother and Rosalind's Aunt Vilinda. They had already sought out a shady spot, where their luncheon was to be served, and now that they were far enough removed from the exciting scenes of the camp-meeting their vivacity of spirit began to recover.

Mrs. Porter, who had refrained from again referring to the subject of the exercises of the morning, was as gracious and captivating as usual, while Nellie and Nettie chattered incessantly to the two cadets; but Millie was not herself, and showed no signs of recuperating under



these more cheering surroundings, and, as soon as she could quietly get away from the others, had taken Rosalind's arm, and together they had sought a shade tree some distance removed from the rest of the party.

Rosalind could divine her friend's intentions, and was ready to try to comfort her in her present state of apparent trouble. However, she did not broach the subject herself, but waited for Millie to speak, who accordingly began.

"I wish I had never come here, Rosalind," she said, emphatically, after giving vent to a little sobbing sigh and leaning her head upon her hand in a despairing kind of way.

Rosalind did not speak, but looked at her interrogatively, and Millie continued:

"I never felt so bad in all my life as I have to-day; not on my own account, but papa's, for it seemed to me that the minister meant every word he said for him; I know papa would have laughed at such ideas, but I could not help but feel that there was a great deal of truth in what he said, and cold chills of horror were creeping over me all the time he was speaking; do you think, Rosalind, that papa will die like that man he described, and be punished forever and ever?"

Rosalind pressed Millie's hand kindly, and replied:

"God is just, Millie, and judges the heart rather than the professions of man, and rewards every one according to their works. It makes no difference whether they belong to any creed or not, just so they believe in Him and pray to Him and keep His commandments."



“Do you really think this, Rosalind, when your father was a minister?” asked Millie, a hopeful gleam illuminating her countenance.

“Yes, I believe it; moreover, it was the doctrine my father taught—love God, pray to Him and keep his commandments, was the theme of his religious instructions,” Rosalind answered sweetly.

“I am so glad to have you tell me this, for I know papa has a kind heart and gives abundantly to the poor, and does a great many charitable things that nobody but we who see it know anything about; and now, dear, I feel better; you are getting to be a great comforter, indeed! and I do not know how I have gotten along this far without you.”

“I am glad to hear you say this; never hesitate about calling upon me when I can be of any service to you.”

Alas! little did Rosalind think what this promise would cost her, and how, in the not far distant future, through favoring this girl, her life would be almost wrecked, and her name the theme of whispered scandals. The two girls had become so much engrossed with the subject they had been discussing as to be unaware of the approach of a third party, and both started with surprise when a voice directly in their midst said:

“Pardon me, ladies, for interrupting you, but Gerald has sent me to look you up.”

Millie’s face flushed scarlet, but she tried to hide her embarrassment, and said, while she rose up quickly:

“How you surprised me, Edgar! you being the last person in the world I was expecting to see; this is my friend, Miss Morton, Mr. Wilkerson.”



The young man bowed gracefully in acknowledgement of the introduction, and Rosalind saw at a glance that he had a handsome face, with dark eyes and a mass of dark curling hair, and furthermore, that there was an expression of deepest admiration shining from the dark eyes, blent with the most profound respect, while he stood there regarding Millie, who continued to chat incessantly, also plying him with many questions.

In answer to the last one he said, "I reached home this A. M. at about seven o'clock, and after breakfasting and spending a couple of hours with the folks, I rode over to Ivy Crown to find that you were all off for Rocky Hill, so I accordingly followed on."

"Of course you have lunched, Edgar, as Gerry would have surely given you something to eat before sending you out in search of us."

"Oh, certainly; you don't suppose I would have ventured out on such a hazardous journey without having first prepared myself, do you?" replied the young man, mischievously.

"I see you haven't forgot how to pun," retorted Millie, as the trio turned their steps in the direction of the others, or rather where they had left them.

Upon arriving on the aforesaid spot, however, they found only the servant boy, Jim, putting away the dishes and table linens, the party having scattered promiscuously about.

"Master Gerald jist lef here bout a minit ago, an sed tell yu all he'd be bac correctly," said Jim, as soon as they came up.



“Very well, Jim, we will wait for him,” Millie answered, dropping down on a log that had served as seats for the party while lunching.

“I feel completely fagged out, and can stand up no longer; won’t you all avail yourselves of the same privilege?” she asked, motioning Rosalind and Edgar to a seat beside her.

“That would hardly be necessary, as we are about ready to start away from the camp grounds at once,” interrupted Gerald, appearing in their midst at that moment.

“Isn’t it rather warm to go now?” inquired Edgar, looking somewhat disappointed.

“Entirely so, hence we are only going a mile or so distant and wait for the cool of the evening,” explained Gerald, leading the way to the wagon while speaking.

In a short time their preparations for starting had been made, and they all were again stored away in the hay wagon. The place at which they had decided to stop was soon reached, and the party found themselves in a shady wood, where long branches of ancient looking trees laced and interlaced above their heads and swayed noiselessly to the zephyr-like breeze. The silence and coolness of the retreat seemed doubly inviting to all, when compared with the heat and confusion of the place they had just left, and there was a feeling of relief experienced by each upon arriving at a spot so pleasantly inviting. Away into the distance arose landscape views, seeming to rise and fall in undulating waves, reflected as they were by the noonday sun, while a profound stillness



reigned supreme. In this wood, so far removed from the traffic of the busy world, which nature alone had adorned and made beautiful, wandered the party, laughing and chattering gayly, like children, each one discovering some new charm everywhere their eyes would turn, and exclaiming, simultaneously :

“How lovely ! how grand ! how beautiful !”

Rosalind was greatly enthused, murmuring inaudibly, “Truly, this is God’s own temple!” while viewing the magnificent handiwork of nature which surrounded and encompassed her. She soon separated from the others and sought out a little sylvan nook, the beauty and solitude of which having attracted and drawn her thither. A green, mossy little glen, almost hidden by overhanging boughs of great straggling trees that hedged it in, while clustering about these trees, as if nature had designed its perfect seclusion, were closely woven vines of wild honeysuckle and clematis, now heavy with luxuriant foliage and bloom, while lightly imbedded in the carpeting of moss beneath her feet, wild violets, forget-me-nots, and bluebells, were blooming in rich profusion. In the center of this pretty little alcove was a large rock, partly moss-covered and grass-grown, grey and motley with age. If it was solitude Rosalind had mostly desired, she had found it, indeed ! for nothing—not even the twitter of a bird—broke the quiet ; and within this sequestered spot, perched upon the old grey rock, the girl gave herself up to the luxury of gazing on the natural loveliness of her little sanctum and day-dreaming. Soon, however, the sound of footsteps broke into her reverie, and the next



moment the vines parted and Gerald stood before her.

“Truly, a fitting throne for a fairy queen; do I behold her majesty’s presence?” he said, bowing and smiling upon her—one of those rare smiles which gave such a charm to his face.

“Alas, no! With the coming of mortal, her majesty has fled,” replied Rosalind, in the same tone of mock seriousness. “But, without jesting, isn’t this a beautiful place, and doesn’t it seem suited to a fairy court, if such things really existed?”

“It does, indeed! and one only has to call to aid a certain amount of imagery to people such a spot with flocks of gleesome little nymphs; instead, however, in this matter-of-fact age, those who might chance upon it, would be more apt to think how easily a foul murder could be perpetrated and concealed here. The poetry and romance of life has almost passed away, and such pretty little idealisms are looked upon as entirely mythical, and belonging to past ages—*Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis*. Like Ouida, I think that all feelings were stronger, warmer and deeper, in the earlier ages of the world, while in this age everything is dwarfed and stunted in its growth from the very offset; and it is simply for this reason that we no longer have great poets and great philosophers amongst us. In those ages genius ruled the world—now it is the almighty dollar. Miss Morton, have you ever read Goethe?”

“Yes; my father and I read his works together,” Rosalind replied, with animation.

“Well, I wish to refer you to Faust as typical of the



past and present. As you are aware, he was a student toiling after knowledge beyond his reach, and, not having acquired the summit of his ambition, became disheartened and forsook his studies and sold himself to Mephistopheles. This allegory shows to what depths human nature can sink and from what heights it can descend, or in other words, to what extremes people are prone to wander, hence our age of enlightenment falls far short of what is termed the darkened ages, and it really seems the world rejoices in retrograding; you are fond of the classics from the fact that your father was a scholar and did not live for the foolish pleasures of the world, while others study them merely because, as a branch of education, it is required of them, without one spark of appreciation for their fine language and true interpretation of character. No such wisdom and ardor of genius now exists, or if it does it is rarely found out. I should have liked very much to have known your father," he added, after a moment's pause.

How these words touched Rosalind no one could have ever guessed, and how much nearer she was drawn to this man by the expression of this wish. A great tide of emotion swept over her, causing her cheeks to flush and pale in rapid succession and her lips to tremble. As soon as she could control her voice sufficiently, she said:

"Your ideas, and views of life also, are very much like his, and I know you would have been very congenial; I, too, would have been very glad for you to have known each other."

Then, as if prompted by a sudden impulse to talk of



him, she told Gerald of their quiet, peaceful life at Brookdale, where all her childhood had been spent, and how she had grown into womanhood with no other teacher or companion but that loved father; and how their final separation had been brought about by that grim-visaged monster—death! And how she had then found a friend and protector in the kind old aunt who had taken her to her heart and home. With what lingering pathos did she dwell on the little details of their everyday life at Brookdale, and how sad and plaintive grew her voice as she described the last days he had spent with her on earth.

And while Gerald listened he felt awakening within his heart a profound sympathy—a pity for the loneliness of the orphan touched him reverently, causing the interest and admiration with which he had hitherto regarded her to take upon it a tenderer form, surprising to himself and increasing in significance as he continued to realize it. Recollecting that it was no time or place for him to indulge in a reverie, thus vainly endeavoring to sift and analyze his own feelings, he hastened to say:

“I feel deeply grateful, Miss Morton, for this proof of your esteem; the confidence you have given me by entrusting to me a synopsis of your former life shall be treasured with most sacred reverence,” and into these words there was much more feeling than he would have cared to express.

Before Rosalind could form an answer the sound of voices were heard, and in another moment Millie had burst in upon them, exclaiming, “Oh, here they are, and



what a lovely place—a regular little bower it is, and so romantic; but who would have ever thought of Gerry, our bachelor, seeking out such a spot for a quiet *tete-a-tete*; it is just too surprising for anything. But I hope you will forgive the intrusion, as Nettie and I were sent by the others to look you up. They all say it is high time we were on the way home; in fact, Mrs. Porter declares we will not reach Ivy Crown to-night if we don't start at once."

At this Gerald looked at his watch, and found to his amaze that it was half-past four, and mentally asked himself, "where had the hours gone?" which had only seemed minutes, so quickly had the time passed while he talked to Rosalind. But he did not regret having tarried, and that chance had brought about this meeting between he and Rosalind, for it had been the means of giving him a clearer insight of the character of this high-souled, pure-minded girl, and had also taught him with what high esteem he was regarded by her.

"It is indeed later than I thought, and I suppose we might as well start now," he said, nonchalantly.

Accordingly, every one soon got themselves in ship-shape style, and the hay-ride was recommenced; this time more after the idea of modern fashion, for it was not long until the sun sunk behind the forest hills, and the shadows deepened in duskiess, and the purple mantle of night had wrapt the earth in darkness. However, their ride home was quite a pleasant one, the worst part of the road having been traversed before the night had fallen upon them. It was past midnight when they reached Ivy



Crown, and as they drove in by a side entrance, lighted by a solitary lamp, which reflected the house, half hidden behind the dense evergreens and tall oaks, there was something almost uncanny and phantasmal in the dimly-lighted grounds through which the heavy vehicle moved slowly. But the party found a more cheerful light awaiting them, streaming out from the hall door, that had been left open to admit them, and they all alighted and trooped into the large diningroom in a rather tiptoe fashion, where, in a few moments, everything was light and color. The long table was, as usual, dazzling with silver and cut-glass, while here and there a rare old piece of china loomed up conspicuously. As to the late dinner, as they fashionably termed it, this proved to be a very gay and talkative one, for none of the servants, but the butler, had remained up, and pretty soon he, too, was dismissed, while Gerald took up the role, acquitting himself very gracefully in this capacity; in truth, every one became busy handing around the various dishes, and the chat and laughter—which at first had been carried on in a somewhat subdued tone—gradually grew louder and louder, until it had almost become boisterous, Nettie and Millie proving the most vivacious of the talkers, while Fred occasionally made it convenient to throw in the latest and most improved slang; and, amid the din of voices, his could be heard proclaiming itself in this wise: “Oh, what are you giving me? you had better take a drop on yourself.” These phrases were generally addressed to Millie, with whom he was wont to take the more privileges than with any of the rest. Rosalind had



never felt happier than while under the influence of so much life and gayety. Naturally enough her youth and health responded to this animated state of existence, and, despite the fact that Mrs. Porter had appeared cold toward her all day,—latterly, almost ignoring her presence, and was now endeavoring to weave about Gerald her spells of fascination—in spite of all this, she was happy, for she felt that in her secret heart she could always think of him as an embodiment of all her idealism; for was he not noble, handsome, and wise, and a very god amongst men? and while all these thoughts of him were filling her somewhat fanciful little head, Millie was talking and laughing with the greatest zest. “Just to think what a day we have had of it, and now that I am at home once more, I feel like a bird let loose, and I must talk; so please don’t any one stop me. I am so glad to be home again, and away from the sight of that solemncolly minister, who said such frightful things,” she went on, laughing and speaking in her light and joyous tone.

“You’ve a lot of cheek, I must say,” put in Fred, who became immediately cross upon mention being made of the camp-meeting, and wore upon his countenance a look of utter disgust—and no wonder, for truly he had been as a target all the afternoon, at which the banter of the whole party had been aimed.

“Well, never mind, Fred; since you escaped without any more serious injuries than a boxing from the fat woman, you might as well get good-natured again and rejoice with the rest of us in the thought that we have, at all hazards, enjoyed a first-class hay-ride,” said Henry, looking knowingly at Nellie.



“And some of you did not forget to carry out the old adage of making hay while the sun was shining,” quoted Edwin, directing his glance towards Rosalind and Gerald.

Mrs. Porter, always on the alert, seeing the little frown of annoyance cross Gerald’s brow, hastened to the rescue by saying sweetly, “At least we can all claim a ‘hey-day’ time of it, if nothing more.”

This *jeu d’esprit* from the wily widow was not, as it seemed, incidentally spoken, but intended as *coup d’etat* towards Gerald, by way of warding off any suspicion of jealousy he might suspect her of entertaining towards Rosalind; and she was right, for the light gayety with which she had treated the reference to the two having spent the greater part of the afternoon *tete-a-tete* had the desired effect upon Gerald, causing him to admire her the more for exercising so much common sense in having relinquished all idea of a renewal of their former relations. But tho’ to all appearances such was the case, her determination as regarded this question was more fixed than ever. Upon this occasion Rosalind had not only realized the complete happiness Gerald’s society afforded her, but she had also made a discovery, which concerned Millie and Edgar Wilkerson. The effect this young man’s presence had produced upon Millie was indeed marvelous, for never had she witnessed such a decided change from grave to gay as his coming had apparently brought about. In truth, she had never seen her in such gay spirits before, or her cheeks glowing and eyes sparkling with such life and animation as upon



this occasion; and then, too, she had not failed to see the soft glances and hand pressures exchanged between these two on their way homeward. Edgar had resigned his horse to black Jim, and returned with the party in the wagon; hence Rosalind, sitting near Millie, had all unintentionally been a witness to this little by-play, which told her plainer than words that they were something more to each other than friendly acquaintances; that they were lovers, not the shadow of a doubt then remained within her mind.



## CHAPTER X.

### THE MYSTERY OF IVY CROWN.

WHILE the rest of the party continued to sit at the table and chat, Rosalind became a silent listener, her own thoughts having taken possession of her, which were, however, very pleasant ones, and as she had long since finished her dinner, she arose from the table apparently unobserved and noiselessly made her way to one of the long French windows; drawn aside the heavy curtain, and slid into a chair beside it, letting the curtain fall about her, which completely concealed her from view.

How intently still everything appeared in the outside world; not a leaf quivered; no late bird fluttered towards her nest and chirped to her nestlings; the young moon had long since veiled her face, and only the stars and the light that streamed from out the open window relieved the grounds from total darkness. This stillness, so peaceful and profound, suited the girl's mood, and involuntarily the beautiful lines of Longfellow's hymn to the night rose to her lips, and in a half whisper she murmured:

“I heard the trailing garments of the night  
Sweep through the marble halls ;  
I saw her sable skirts—all fringed with light  
From the celestial walls.

“I felt her presence by it's spell of might  
Stoop o'er me from above ;  
The calm majestic presence of the night,  
As of the one I love.”



"As of the one I love," she again repeated, while a great tide of feeling swept over her; all her pulses were bounding, seeming to be imbued with new and ecstatic life. A sensation of happiness, so full and complete, in living, came with an overpowering, all-absorbing realism. What was it that had dawned upon her life, awakening all these unknown senses and quickening them into the most intense vibrations? she asked herself as she sat there looking into the outside world, then so dark, so mysterious, yet withal inspiring her with such new emotions.

There had yet come no answer to this query, when suddenly a slight sound, emanating from a clump of evergreens, situated a few feet from the window, attracted her attention and caused her to start up in alarm. But before she could withdraw herself from the retreat, a figure—hideous in aspect and horribly uncanny—leaped out from behind the cedars and came close up beside her, so close, in fact, that had it reached out one of its long, skeleton-like hands, it could have touched her. And she saw with a glance that it was the same creature that she had encountered in the grounds on her first visit to Ivy Crown, but, as seen in this wan light, it appeared twice as unearthly as it had upon the first occasion. And while it stood beside her thus, it begun to babble its incomprehensible gibberish, and reached forth one of its claw-like hands as if to grasp her and drag her forth into the utter darkness. Rosalind attempted to fly from the horrible something that seemed to hound this lovely home, but her limbs refused to carry her, seeming to have become



perfectly paralyzed with terror which finally so overcome her, that with a stifled moan she sank upon the floor in a dead swoon. Gerald having missed her from the table, was just in the act of going in search of her, when the noise of her fall caused him to look into the recess of the window; then seeing, with consternation, what had happened, he returned to the table and, calling Millie to one side, he quietly instructed her to take the guests from the diningroom and return to him as soon as they had been disposed of—"remember, to say that Miss Morton has already gone to her room for the night." All Millie's roses were at once transformed into the whitest of lilies, when Gerald drew aside the curtain and disclosed to her Rosalind lying there so white and still, that all semblance of life had fled. However, she did not scream or faint, but, obedient to Gerald's wish, proposed to her lady guests to conduct them to their rooms, adding in as natural a tone as she could assume, "that Rosalind had already retired." As soon as all had vacated the room, Gerald returned to Rosalind, and, raising her in his arms as if she had been an infant, he held her for one brief moment clasped close to his heart; and then it was that he realized that the most tender chords of his nature had been swept with a masterful stroke, and came to understand fully that it was no longer a question of regard and sympathy with which she had inspired him—but love. This knowledge came to him then and there with force and vigor, and, as he gazed into her lovely face, all the glorious imagination of his youth seemed to have been born again—the idealism of his soul had again sprung into life.



Then he heard Millie's steps coming rapidly toward him, and he laid his sacred charge upon a couch. As his sister approached, she saw that Gerald's face was almost as white as that of the inanimate girl's, and she, too, felt overcome with anxiety; for some moments no word was spoken, but between the two, there was exchanged a look of sympathy and mutual understanding. Then Gerald said, abruptly, "Attend to her, Millie; there are other duties awaiting me now." The next moment he had stepped from the window into the densely shadowed grounds. When Rosalind came back to consciousness, she found Millie kneeling beside her, looking pale and sorrowful, and in nowise like the Millie of half an hour ago—then so radiant with smiles and blushes. "What has happened?" she asked, looking vaguely around, and letting her eyes rest upon Millie wonderingly.

"Nothing, only you were a little faint after the fatigue and excitement of the day, but you are ever so much better now, aren't you?" Millie asked sweetly, adjusting the pillows and trying to look unconcerned.

Rosalind listened to Millie's explanations in a bewildered kind of way, then her glance wandered in the direction of the window. Upon seeing the partly drawn curtain, and the chair in which she had sat a few minutes previous, she shuddered with horror, for the memory of the fearful spectacle returned to her, and raising herself from the sofa, she looked straight at Millie.

"You are mistaken, Millie, in regard to the fatigue and excitement of the day causing me to faint, for it was not that, but a fright I received while at the window. Oh, it was horrible, and I must tell you about it."



“No, no; not now; Gerry said I must keep you quiet, and put you to bed as quickly as possible; he has gone out now to see if there is any one prowling about the grounds who might have frightened you; but come now, if you feel able to walk we will go to my room and try to get a little sleep; look, it will soon be daylight!” she continued, drawing aside the curtain and revealing a mysterious gray light in the sky that had no warmth in it, but which betokened the near approach of morning; at that moment, too, a clock in some part of the house chimed the hour of four. The short summer night had sped away on lightning wings.

Obedient to Gerald’s wishes, Rosalind did not attempt to further discuss the strange visitation, for she remembered what her aunt Vilinda had told her of the mystery that seemed to hover constantly about the walls of this ancestral home; hence she felt intuitively that it was best to keep silent on the subject. But thoughts of this and many other things were confusedly passing in her mind while she lay beside Millie, vainly invoking the drowsy god to visit her pillow and thus restore her usual calm; but her efforts were unavailing, and when the sunlight streamed through the casements of stained glass, all rose and violet hued, she was still wakeful and feverish. She knew she could not partake of breakfast, which would be served at nine o’clock, so she begged that Millie would allow her to quietly take her leave before any of the rest of the household had arisen. She wished to walk to Morton Place in the early cool of the morning, and though Millie tried in every way to get her to relinquish



the idea, she carried it out, wending her way all alone through the beautiful woods while the inmates of Ivy Crown were yet abed. So preoccupied with her thoughts was she as she walked homeward that for one time in her life she failed to see and admire the beauties of nature round about her. This new phase of life into which she had so suddenly merged, so fraught with changeful interest, was bewildering to her. It was almost impossible to realize how she had at once taken her position amongst these grand people, and how friendly she had been received and welcomed in their midst, and then the fact dawned upon her mind that these people had found her congenial to them because she, too, was of gentle blood, for though her father had chosen such an humble lot in life, he was nevertheless by birth and education an aristocrat, and in Gerald Underwood she had found his counterpart; yes, surely he was very like him in many ways; and she again recalled to mind how happy she had been while under the influence of his presence, and all the delights her heart had known on the day previous, until that strange menacing presence had come to awaken her from her happy dream, and cause an icyness to settle about her heart that had been at that time throbbing with such new and tender emotions. What was this mysterious creature that had twice appeared to her, a thing horribly uncanny in daylight, but doubly hideous by night? Was it real flesh and blood, or was it something supernatural?

Rosalind trembled violently and grew white as death as she recalled the loathsome visaged thing leering at her; there was something in its expression that filled her with



disgust and sickening terror; she tried, however, to banish its image from her mind and appear as though nothing had disturbed her, for she was nearing Morton Place and she did not wish to frighten her aunt with white cheeks and terror-stricken eyes.

Miss Morton, keenly observant to everything, did not fail to see that Rosalind's cheeks were colorless and that she appeared far from well.

“'Pon my word, child, you are wearing yourself out trying to keep up with these fashionable young folks at the Crown; you are just as white as a sheet this morning, and will be sick if you don't rest yourself up a little before taking another jaunt,” exclaimed the old lady as soon as she entered the house.

Rosalind did not feel in a mood to tell Miss Vilinda the cause of her indisposition, but merely said that she was not feeling very well, and would go to her room and lie down for awhile; at which Polly screamed and laughed loudly, and then, in her shrillest tones, cried out, “Hello, Rosa. I say, Rosa, it's your bedtime; go to bed—to bed, my pretty Rosa; my pretty red Rosa.”

But all the bird's hilarity of spirits failed to amuse pretty Rosa on that day, and she was glad to escape to her room as quickly as possible, and while our heroine retires to her couch to seek the so much needed repose, and the breezes of Somnus are gently fanning her into the rosy bowers of dreamland, we will return to Edgar Wilkerson, who had also spent the remainder of the night under the hospitable roof of Ivy Crown, and, like Rosalind, was returning at an early hour to his father's home.



He, too, was indulging in a deep train of thought as he walked his horse leisurely along the highway that lay between the two farms; and that his thoughts were not of the most pleasant nature, could be easily deciphered from the expression of his face. Finally his reverie took the form of words: "It is duced hard, and yet—" and then followed a prolonged whistle; and again he fell to thinking. So absorbed was he as he passed along the beautiful country, with its broad fields and rich pastures of verdure, rendered doubly beautiful at this time, laden with dewdrops, which sparkled and glistened in the morning sunlight, that he failed to observe anything pertaining to the grandeur of his surroundings, or realize how truly this had been termed "God's country." In vain had Nature put on her brightest and loveliest attire; in vain did the birds carol forth their sweetest notes as they sat among, and flitted about, the thick branches of the green hedge on either side—all in vain! And when he saw that he was approaching near his home, he walked his horse still more slowly, as if loath to give up his quiet ride—the solitude around him was better adapted to his feeling than the confusion of his father's house. Arrived there, he made no stop until he had reached his own room. Then, lighting a cigar and putting on his slippers, he continued thinking. He recounted his boyhood with the uncongenial home associations, and how his acquaintance with Millie Underwood—the blue-eyed fairly-like child—had been the first break of sunshine to illumine and make beautiful his heretofore sombre-hued life; and how, since the first day



he had spoken to her, and been allowed to carry her satchel of books to and from the school she had attended, he had cherished her image as the most sacred thing on earth. In those days she had been his witching fairy, his good angel; now she had grown to be his heart's idol, his beautiful goddess, and the schoolboy love had grown with his growth, and intensified with his manhood until it was no longer love which filled his whole being for her, but worship. And yet when he compared her aristocratic blood, and the social element surrounding her, to that of his common place position in life, he felt that the difference that lay between them was as wide as a gulf, and with this realism would come a wild despair, which, for a time, would prove overwhelming to his hopes and desires. But again, out of the chaos of doubts and fears, and almost utter hopelessness, one bright ray of sunshine—if not of hope—would brighten the gloom of his soul; and that was the thought that, in spite of all the obstacles that arose between them, Millie, sweet Millie Underwood, was not indifferent to him; yea, he even dared to believe that she loved him—not with the adoring, worshipful love he had bestowed upon her, but with that coy, girlish preference, manifested in so many ways; but alas, while his love would continue to grow and expand, she could never be to him more than what she had been the day before, when he sat beside her in a hay wagon. And were not their present ones the only possible relations that could, or would, ever exist between them, and ought he not to be proud and content that even this much was his? Reason told him that this ought to satisfy him,



but his heart cried out for something more. Why could he not be guided by reason, when it plainly pointed him to the truth that their paths would be divided in the future? For well he knew of the Underwoods' pride of birth, and, knowing this, he also knew that Judge Underwood would never consent to one of his children making a mesalliance, and only some one whose blood ran as blue in his veins as that of Millie's could marry her, and that one would be sure to come along sooner or later; and where would he be then? Only a remembrance, and nothing more. And so the impalpable was interwoven with those dreams of her, which would come unbidden by day, as well as night. Then, in the despair of thus loving her, came vague thoughts of setting aside all conventionality, caste, and everything else, that arose as an impediment between them, and make bold to claim her, and wear her in his heart forever. Then he would question within himself if she would be willing to descend from those serene heights, upon which she now stood, and yield herself a willing companion for his humbler walks in life. Again his mood changed into bitter self-reproach, and self-contempt, and he asked himself why did he indulge in such miserable folly in reaching out for what was utterly beyond his grasp, in thus presuming to think of marriage with the daughter of an aristocrat; a girl, too, who was unmistakably proud of her blue blood; and he, only a struggling lawyer—a nobody—whose family would only be parvenues, no matter what he ever attained in his profession.

So the long morning crept by, while his thoughts roved



on; one moment he would be placing leagues and leagues between Millie and himself, the next picturing her smiling, blushing face, as she had appeared the day before; could it be possible that it was only yesterday when he sat by her side and held her little hand within his own? It seemed that ages instead of hours had elapsed since he had seen her, and he wondered, if this privilege was denied him, what would become of him, and asked himself how he would bear it? He was aroused from his reverie by the sound of the high noon dinner bell, and then he knew he would have to go through the ordeal of meeting the other members of the family in the diningroom. This he dreaded, on this day in particular, as he felt in no mood to see his mother sitting at the head of the table with a loose wrapper upon her uncorseted figure, and, moreover, to be compelled to listen to her denunciatory remarks about the grandees whom he had been visiting, this term being always applied by her to the Underwoods when speaking of them.

All this was humiliating to the greatest degree to the young man; especially after just having come from under the refining influence of the inmates of Ivy Crown did he realize the coarseness of the very atmosphere of his home. Though John Wilkerson, the father of Edgar, was in point of wealth the equal of any of the well-to-do citizens of the bluegrass regions, still he belonged to the mediocracy, and did not boast of any of the royal blue blood which was the heritage of the proud aristocrat. He was only plain John Wilkerson, who had just enough education to read and write a little; however, it was said that



he came of a very good Virginia family, but had ran away from home when quite a lad on account of the cruelty of his stepmother, becoming a hired hand in the home of an ignorant old man who thought it unnecessary to educate his children. Later on in life, after he had grown to manhood, he had married the daughter of his employer—a woman perfectly illiterate. Thus it was, having by his industry and perseverance amassed a considerable sum, he was enabled to purchase a blue-grass farm in this cultured locality. Having felt the inferiority of his position as compared with his neighbors, who represented the elite of Kentucky, he had resolved to spare no pains in educating his only son, Edgar, who had proven a very bright pupil while at school; therefore he had been given a collegiate course, after the completion of which he had adopted the study of law; and at the time he is introduced to the reader is installed as junior partner in a prominent law office of Lexington, and had come home to spend his summer's vacation.

That these visits were not always of the most pleasant nature one can easily imagine; but he was a dutiful son, and endeavored with all his strength of will not to despise the home that had sheltered his infancy and the mother who had cradled him on her bosom. But while he respected his father and honored him for his industry and integrity of character, always listening attentively to his good-natured narrations and to the oft-repeated story of how he begun life, the ignorance and stubborn arrogance of his mother disgusted him and at times became insufferable. She hated those who represented the higher



elements of life with a venom, and never let an opportunity pass without venting her dislike upon them.

These good people, however, ignored the fact of Mrs. Wilkerson's distaste, attempting in various ways to make friends with the two girls and Edgar, but it was with the son only did they succeed, as the daughters were never permitted by the mother to accept any of the friendly invitations extended to them; and through her precaution also, their education had been limited to that of the village school.

But to return to Edgar, who had just answered the dinner bell, and whom we now find making one of the family group around the table. Scarce had he seated himself at the family board than his eyes were struck with the contrast afforded between this and the handsome room and tastefully arranged table, laden with silver and cut glass, at which he had sat the night before under the hospitable roof of Ivy Crown. Instead of the costly furniture there were cheap chairs, a cheap table and a cheap sideboard; instead of the valuable silver plate, the dinner was served upon the very cheapest of china. All this lack of taste and refinement fell with sickening effect upon the sensitive nerves of Edgar, and he realized more fully than ever the great and insurmountable barrier that would serve in future to separate him from Millie.



## CHAPTER XI.

### MILLIE'S SECRET.

ALL day long the rain had fallen incessantly, sometimes in swift, brisk showers, then again in a slow, monotonous patter, that gave no sign of ceasing. The sky was completely overcast with leaden-hued clouds, and the atmosphere was heavy with that damp chilliness—at once penetrating and disagreeable. The beautiful green meadows around about Morton Place were almost submerged and everything without presented a drenched, dismal appearance. Rosalind stood at the parlor window looking out upon the darkened sky and increasing downpour, and lamenting over the rain. Fully a week had passed since she had seen Millie, but the day previous a note had come to her, saying, “I am just dying to see you, and do not think I can exist another day without this privilege; so I am coming to Morton Place to-morrow, and don’t you forget it. Remember, too, that when I come I have a secret to tell you.”

And then it was almost six o’clock, and still Millie had not put in an appearance, hence Rosalind had about despaired of her coming, thinking the continuous rain had rendered her visit impossible. But, not so, for just as she had arrived at this conclusion, a carriage turned a bend in the road and came directly toward the house; in a few moments stopping at the gate. Then the driver, in sleek, shining oilcloth, came down from his seat, opened



the door of the vehicle, and, to Rosalind's great joy, out stepped Millie, sweet and smiling as a half-blown rose.

"Did you think I was not coming? Well, if you did, you were never more mistaken in your life, my pretty Rosa," she exclaimed as she tripped up the walk and stood beside Rosalind, holding her rosy lips for a kiss.

"Yes; to tell the truth, Millie, I had about given up the hope of your coming to-night. So I am doubly glad to see you," Rosalind replied, kissing her affectionately and hastening to remove her damp wraps.

"Well, you need never give me out when I tell you I am coming; I told papa at luncheon that you were sick, and I wished to come to Morton Place but the rain had prevented me, and he said, kindly, 'never mind the rain, Camille; I will send you over in the carriage as soon as I return, and that will be between four and five o'clock.' And so you see my dear, kind papa was as good as his word, and here I am."

"And your presence is as revivifying as the sunshine breaking through the clouds," Rosalind replied, heartily.

"What a pretty speech; but, since I come to think of it, I have never heard you make any other than pretty speeches. You know, Rosa, I am awfully stuck on you—I mean, I like you very much; but you know that is the way Fred would have put it, and I don't care who knows it. Neither Nettie's jealousy or Mrs. Porter's sarcastic remarks will ever have the effect of causing me to love you less. And now I am just longing for tea to be over so we can go to that cozy, old-fashioned room of yours, and have a nice little chat all to ourselves."



It was not a great while before Millie had her wish, for while they were talking in this animated strain, the sound of Miss Vilinda's bell for tea fell on their ears.

"Well, you have your wish, so far as tea is concerned, as there is the bell; and not to keep Aunt Vi waiting, we will go in at once. You know how much the dear old lady prizes promptness; but remember we must not appear in a hurry to leave the table, but wait until she dismisses us by calling in the cats," instructed Rosalind.

"How queer," commented Millie, as they repaired to the diningroom.

"Howdy do, Camille, glad to see you," said Miss Vilinda, extending her hand.

"I am pretty well, thank you, Miss Vilinda, how are you getting on with your neuralgia?" said Millie, going near the old lady and speaking loudly.

"I am poorly, Camille, poorly; it has been a very bad day for my head; I have suffered wretchedly. But it makes one forget their aches to see you look so fresh and bright; youth is delightful, and I like to see all young people happy," said the old lady, smiling kindly on the two girls.

"And how is Polly, has she got neuralgia, too?" asked Millie, sotto voce, addressing Rosalind.

"I don't know; however, you will soon have the opportunity of hearing from her all about the state of her health and various other matters, as she has already commenced to bristle up."

Rosalind had scarcely finished speaking, when Polly, who had maintained a strict silence for the past ten min-



utes, cried out woefully, "A bad head, a bad head, all day a bad head; go to bed, Rosa, go to bed; a bad head, a bad head," she continued, rocking herself and croaking dolefully.

The comical attitude of the bird and the tone of mock distress which it had assumed was too much for Millie's risibles, and regardless of her prim surroundings she burst into a peal of merry laughter, in which Rosalind joined, and Miss Vilinda so far forgot her suffering as to smile one of her most genial smiles.

"It's too bad of you, Polly, to be so afflicted," said Millie, as soon as she could control her voice sufficiently to speak. "But I must tell you all of a parrot I saw while in New Orleans last winter; it belonged to a gentleman friend of papa's, who purchased it from a sea captain, and with the exception of Polly it was the funniest bird I ever saw; it was never silent a moment, for when it was not talking it was singing, and you could not go near it but what it would swear at you horribly."

"What's that? speak louder, louder, I say," screamed Polly, while she turned herself rapidly about, leaping from one swing of her cage to the other, her feathers ruffled, her eyes snapping angrily, seeming to emit sparks of fire.

Tea was now about over, but agreeable to Rosalind's suggestion the two lingered for a little chat with Miss Vilinda before going to Rosalind's room.

"Parrots are strange birds, and I am sometimes inclined to believe them a species of human; what do you think of them, Miss Vilinda?" said Millie, endeavoring to keep up the conversation.



“I do not think the parrot really more sensible than other birds, but from the fact that they have the gift of speech every one takes pains to educate them. Their sayings are none of them original, and they only repeat what they are taught and what people say in their presence; Polly, for instance, claims to be very deaf, while on the contrary her hearing is very acute.”

Then Miss Morton arose and called her cats, thus summarily dismissing the girls, who, taking the hint, also arose from the table, and bidding the old lady a pleasant good-night repaired at once to Rosalind's room, which looked cheerfully inviting, lighted by a bright wood fire that Uncle Peter had kindled for the purpose of driving away the dampness.

“And now for our cozy chat,” Millie exclaimed, enthusiastically, after having given the apartment a glance of satisfaction, and perched herself in an old-fashioned rocker, while Rosalind sat down upon the Turkish rug at her feet.

“Not until you have descended from that mighty throne and sunk to my level can we talk in comfort,” replied Rosalind, smiling sweetly up at the pretty girl.

“I was just thinking of doing so, and here I come.” Suiting the action to the word, Millie slid from the chair, and nestled down beside her friend in the childish way that to Rosalind was charmingly irresistible. And, sitting thus in the full glow of the firelight, the two girls were, indeed, fair to look upon—Millie, with her sweet blue eyes, golden hair, and rosy, pouting lips, represented the fairest type of blonde beauty; while Rosalind's bonny



brown locks, dark blue eyes, and intellectual cast of features, made a pretty and agreeable contrast, and it would have been a hard matter to decide as to which of the two was the most beautiful.

“Do you know, Rosa, that I have been longing for a whole week for this opportune moment to come around? And now that it has come, and I have you all to myself, I am at a loss to know how to begin to tell you what I have so much desired, and I really wish you would guess it all, for, as I told you in my note, I have a secret, and one that I would not trust to any one but you for the world.”

Having thus far unburdened herself, Millie rested her arms upon Rosalind's knees and looked lovingly into the pure sweet face, her rosy blushes appearing even rosier than ever, in the flickering glow of the waning firelight.

“I am not very good at guessing, Millie, but if you feel the least disinclined to tell me, don't try, for you know 'tis said by some old sage, that a secret is a secret no longer when once told; therefore, when you have confided it to me, you will no longer be the sole possessor of it.”

“Well, that is just what I want to do, to share it with some one who can sympathize with me, like I feel you can; for the truth is, Rosa, I cannot stand it all by myself a day longer; it sticks in my throat and makes my heart have all kinds of palpitations. As to you, I have no fears whatever that you will betray me, and would not be afraid to trust you with my life, as the saying goes; so—



“ ‘My pretty secret's coming, just listen with your heart,  
And you will hear it humming so close 'twill make you start.’ ”

The soft soprano tones of the fair girl fell low and flute-like on the ear of Rosalind, who sat regarding Millie with a look of deepest admiration expressed upon her frank, innocent face, at the same time smoothing the lovely golden tresses that had strayed about the charmingly white forehead, and listening quietly for the pretty secret. But scarcely had the little song ceased when tears filled the pretty eyes and came splashing down the rosy cheeks, and pretty soon great sobs begun to shake the slight form. This was altogether a new phase of a girl to Rosalind and totally inexplicable to her, for she had heretofore believed Millie to be the very happiest girl she had ever known—little thinking that she had ever experienced a deeper grief than such as had been awakened by the young minister, in regard to the spiritual welfare of her father. But things had taken on a different aspect now; however, she did not question her, or in any way intrude upon her sorrow; instead, she remained silent, and drew the golden head more closely still to her bosom, letting it rest there until the storm had passed, and Millie sat upright. Then, pressing her hands to her flushed cheeks, she said: “I know you think me a great goose for crying like I have, but I couldn't help it, Rosa, and since it's all over I feel a great deal better, and think I can talk now. The truth is, my dear girl, I found it harder to speak than I had anticipated, for my story is of something that has been treasured in my heart for years; and then, too, I have such a great favor to ask of you after



you have heard me through; but before I commence I want you to promise me that you will never answer any questions concerning what I tell you, no matter who puts them to you. Will you promise me, Rosa?"

"On my honor, Millie, I promise never to disclose anything you tell me; but, as I said before, I would rather you would not tell me, if you feel any hesitancy in so doing."

"Oh, it is not that I am afraid to trust my secret with you, but the fear that I am asking too much of you?" replied Millie interrogatively.

"You need have no fears on that score, Millie, as it would be utterly impossible for me to refuse you anything that lies in my power to grant."

Ah, fatal, fatal words; little did Rosalind dream of what they would cost her in the not far-away future.

"Well, then, without farther preface, I will say, I'm in love! Yes, I, Camille Underwood, daughter of one of the proudest men of Kentucky, am hopelessly in love, and with whom it is useless to inform you, as I think you already know."

Rosalind nodded assent, and Millie continued:

"Well, most every one who observes me closely guesses as much, but no one but Mrs. Porter has ever taken me to task about it, or as much as hinted the possibility of such being the case. This lady, however, in a very sweet manner, accused me of it the day after our hay-ride, and right in the presence of papa, too, which caused him to question me in a very serious manner about the matter. Of course I had to deny it, and consequently told him a falsehood."



After proceeding this far, Millie drew a long breath that had in it the sound of a sob, and went on softly:

“I can’t just remember how and when it all came about—in fact, I have had an affection for Edgar Wilkerson ever since I was a wee child, when he would come to Ivy Crown to go hunting with Gerry, and, latterly, when we attended the same school, and our way lay partly in the same direction, and he would wait for me where the road united and carry my lunch basket and satchel for me. You see, Rosa, Gerry had gone off to college, and Fred was not large enough to go to school, so Edgar always acted the part of a brother towards me. His two sisters—Kate and Jennie—would never wait for me, for neither of them liked me; though I always treated them kindly and tried to be friends with them, they called me stuck-up and proud, for no other reason in the world than because I wore pretty white aprons, and had my hair neatly braided every morning. They were never tidy in their dress, and often came to school with their hands and faces—I verily believe—unwashed.”

Again Millie paused and looked thoughtfully into the smouldering embers, and there was reflected in her face a radiant wrapt expression while her thoughts turned backward. Again she sees the dear old road that led her to and from the school-house which her childish feet had so often traversed, and again the handsome face of Edgar Wilkerson, watching eagerly for her coming; again she feels his warm hand clasp, and again hears the sound of his cheery voice while he talked to amuse her, or taught her the most difficult lines of the multiplication table.



“Was I dreaming?” she asked, turning her beautiful lovelit face to Rosalind; “well, I had gone back to those dear old days and was living them over again. Where did I leave off? Oh, I remember; I was telling you of our school days together; you must know that Edgar was at least eight years my senior, and he got along so rapidly in his studies that long before I was sent off to boarding school he had gone to college. Papa and all the gentlemen of the neighborhood had become interested in Mr. Wilkerson’s son, because he was so bright and his people were so illiterate, and they encouraged Mr. Wilkerson in his determination to give Edgar a good education. When he first went away to college he did not write to me, and I grieved myself nearly to death because I could not hear from him only through Gerry; but when he came home on his first vacation it so happened that we met often, for Gerry was at home then, and as I was only twelve years old of course no one thought anything of our frequent conversations or decided preference for each other’s society. Before he returned to college I asked him to write to me; he hesitated for some little time, and then replied by asking if I thought papa would be willing for me to correspond with him, and I answered him truthfully. No, I replied, he would not; not even if I were grown up he would not wish me to correspond with you, Edgar; but what is the use of him knowing it? you can address my letters to the care of the general delivery and no one will ever be any the wiser; the other girls all have their young men friends write them, and why shouldn’t I? However,



I gained my point, though he had conscientious scruples in the matter and was inclined to think he was not acting exactly honorable; and so we have been writing to each other ever since, secretly, and you are the first one to whom I have ever breathed a word concerning the whole affair."

Again Millie stopped and looked interrogatively at Rosalind, who had not interrupted her once during her recital.

"Go on, I will not tell you what I think about it until I have heard you through," Rosalind said, in reply to the mute appeal. "But the cat is out now, and our movements will be watched more closely in future; in fact, we are in a perfect muddle at present, and all through that meddlesome piece of perfection, as she believes herself to be, Mrs. Porter. But I must tell you how it all came about. While at luncheon the other day the subject of the Wilkersons came up by Gerald asking if Edgar had been over in the morning. Then Mrs. Porter took occasion to inquire why it was that none of the Wilkerson family except Edgar ever came to Ivy Crown. 'I believe you are neighbors, aren't you?' she asked, addressing papa. 'Yes,' he answered, 'but not congenial ones; Edgar is the only member of the family that we can tolerate.' 'What a pity,' she replied, with a little laugh, 'I had about made up my mind that Edgar and Millie would make a match of it some day, and now my pretty little romance is at an end, for I know you would never consent to any of your children marrying beneath them, and I quite agree with you.' Of course all eyes were turned



upon me, for every one, except Gerry, who had left the table, had heard her remarks. Nellie and Nettie both giggled, and Henry and Edwin coughed and turned red, trying to keep from laughing. As to myself, I felt my face turning white and red by turns, and, as Fred says, you could have knocked me down with a feather. I, however, kept my eyes fixed on my plate and appeared deaf to the subject throughout; when I did dare to raise them I found papa regarding me seriously. I felt vexed enough to cry out, but I knew that feline widow had put her silken paws in my affairs for nothing but spite, because I did not fall down and worship her as Nellie and Nettie pretend to do; and she is mad, too, because I think so much of you, for I tell you, Rosa, she is as jealous of you as can be, not on my account, but Gerry's, for between you and I she came here with the intention of catching him, but judging from his manner towards her, he is not going to be taken in by her as easily as she had imagined; but I must continue and not make my story too long, for fear of wearing out your patience. When we were leaving the diningroom papa detained me by saying, 'Camile, remain here a few moments, I wish to speak to you alone.' I tried to compose myself to meet the ordeal that I knew was coming, while he sipped his wine, and when he offered to fill my glass I allowed him to do so without thinking what I was doing. For a little while we both sat in perfect silence, papa sipping his wine and I trying to pluck up courage to reply to whatever question he would ask. At last he said, 'Millie, the little remark Mrs. Porter made at luncheon has



put me to thinking, and I wish to ask you if Edgar Wilkerson has ever attempted to make love to you? Tell me truly, little daughter,' he added, drawing his chair nearer my own and laying his hand caressingly upon my head and smoothing my hair in a fatherly way. 'Never, papa,' I replied, with vehemence; and I spoke the truth. Papa seemed greatly relieved at my prompt answer, and went on to explain that he had never thought of the danger of anything of this kind coming up between the two families; in fact, he still regarded me as a child, but Mrs. Porter's words having thrown a different light on the matter was why he had questioned me. Then he went on to say that he could never think of such a mesalliance in his family, and wound up by requesting me to have as little to say to Edgar Wilkerson as possible, and not to encourage his attentions; for though he respected his efforts in trying to make something of himself, the fact that his family were only parvenues still remained patent. And then he asked me to promise him that I would have but little to say to him when he came to Ivy Crown. I felt angry enough to say the most horrid things of that scheming widow, but I had to bite my lips and keep silent, for papa and Hetty think her an angel of perfection, and I dared not express myself. Now, Rosalind, you have heard the whole of my secret, and now comes the test of your friendship," Millie went on with that irresistible smile and winning grace which would have appealed to a less tender heart even than Rosalind's.

"Well, it is this I wish to ask of you, and I do hope you won't allow any conscientious scruples to interfere,



for it is of vast import to me and my future. As you are aware, under the circumstances I will have to be very distant toward Edgar, and on my p's and q's all the time; and you will have to come to my assistance in the matter by making him understand just how I am situated, and being the bearer of a letter to him. Do you consent to this, or is the test too great to be practical?"

For a few moments Rosalind remained silent, trying to decide within her own mind what would be the best course to pursue, and, while her friendship and love for this girl was unbounded, and she felt she was willing to make any personal sacrifice to add to her happiness, still her own consciousness of right and wrong told her she should not encourage Millie in practicing deception with her dear and honored father. The code of Rosalind's moral principles were averse to what Millie required at her hands; but, what was to be done? It was evident that Millie took a different view of the matter altogether, fully expecting Rosalind to co-operate in her behalf.

"You ought to know, Millie, that I would be willing to do anything you should ask of me which would add to your happiness and well-being, but in this case, dear, I must admit I have conscientious scruples, and I think I would be doing you a positive injustice by lending my aid in deceiving your dear, kind father. Think of it, Millie, and ask your own heart if you would not be perpetrating a wrong that would eventually cause you suffering."

"I have thought of it all, Rosalind, and in obedience to papa's wishes have tried to give Edgar up, but I find



it impossible. Of course, I am too young to marry Edgar, and were I to do so I would have to elope, for which papa would never forgive me, or even speak to me again; but, unless I can find some way of communicating with him, and at the same time keep down suspicion, I am afraid I will do something desperate."

Again the blue eyes were swimming in tears as they were turned in sorrowful reproach upon Rosalind, who, unable longer to resist Millie's argument and pitiful, pleading look, gave a reluctant consent to become the mediator between the two, little thinking that it would serve in the future to involve her in the most inscrutable mystery and steep her fair name in the direst calumny.

"You are the very dearest girl living to so kindly promise to aid me, when it is in a matter so far removed from your principles; but rest assured, let what will come of it, no blame shall ever fall on you," said Millie, kissing Rosalind affectionately and smiling upon her bewitchingly. And Rosalind, thinking that by giving this promise to Millie, she had doubtless saved the impetuous child from committing some rash act—no longer experienced such compunction of conscience; little dreaming of the web of deception and suspicion she was all unawares weaving about herself, or how, through this fatal promise, she would become the victim of the merciless, scheming widow, whose one great aim in life was to again bring Gerald Underwood to her feet, and that to accomplish this fixed purpose her first undertaking would be to dethrone her acknowledged and hated rival, Rosalind Morton.



And while the two girls sat there in the gloaming, and watched the shadows—made by the dying firelight—deepen, and listened to the pattering raindrops and the sighing of the wind without, not one ominous token of what was to come did those dismal sounds portend. Happily for them, they could not raise the mystic veil, and, all unconscious of the vortex of sorrow into which they would ere long be plunged, a blissful content seemed to have settled upon their spirits; for truly, youth, with its buoyant hopes and radiant colorings, can be likened unto a soft summer day, which, while the sun shines, gives no token of the storm-cloud that lies in the background—appearing at first so small as to scarcely be perceptible, but gathering so rapidly that, before one is aware of it, the whole heavens are overcast—and such is life!



## CHAPTER XII.

### NEW COMPLICATIONS.

FOR some days after Millie's visit to Morton Place the weather continued rainy. Consequently, Miss Vilinda's neuralgia did not improve, and as Rosalind continued in close attendance upon her aunt, her outings were few. But, as the weather begun to clear up and summer to assert itself, the old lady gradually grew better, and, fearing the confinement would tell on the health of her niece, insisted that she would go out for the fresh air, and Rosalind had gladly assented, for these dismal wet days had not been without their unpleasant effect upon her; and between her aunt's sufferings and Polly's repeated lamentations over her bad head, the situation, to say the least, had been a trying one; hence it had been delightful to her to again see the sun shining and hear the birds singing. Nature was her inspirer, her exceeding great joy. Then, too, it so happened that on the occasion of many of her walks she had met Gerald, who made it convenient to extend his, in the direction she was going, talking to her all the time in that friendly, social manner, that put her so much at her ease, and left such pleasant memories in her mind, and caused her heart to vibrate with such happy emotions. In spite of all her book knowledge and classical lore, Rosalind was of an unspoiled nature, and experienced as great a delight in the true enjoyments of life as a little child. To those higher, purer joys, her soul was wedded,



and when she again saw the beautiful landscape stretched out, all bathed in the lovely glow, and the deep blue arch of heaven above her, and again felt the soft green grass beneath her feet, she felt as if she could clap her hands and shout aloud for very joy. In the innocence and pure disinterestedness of her nature, she made no plans for the future, for this delightful phase of existence was in itself complete, the most charming feature of which was her association with the inmates of Ivy Crown. Furthermore, she realized that her ideal of a true and noble man was fully realized in Gerald, and much of her happiness depended on the knowledge that he was near her.

And thus the time glided sweetly and harmoniously by, bringing to Rosalind another unlooked-for event in her life. It was just one week from Millie's visit to Rosalind when a note of invitation came to Morton Place, the Underwood carriage accompanying it, which ran in this wise:

“My Dearest Rosa—I send the carriage over for you this afternoon, and will take no excuse; so you must not offer any, but come at once. Tell Miss Vilinda that the time I will have you remain is yet unfixed, hence she need not expect you at any definite period.”

And notwithstanding that Rosalind had received such a fright at the time of her last visit to Ivy Crown, she felt perfectly overjoyed at the thought of again roaming among the beauties of this apparently spectre-haunted home, for in anticipation of Millie's smiling welcome and Gerald's kindly words of greeting all unpleasant memories of her previous encounters with the ungainly and



mysterious creature were swept away, and after gaining her Aunt Vilinda's consent to her going, she went about her preparations with childish eagerness.

Selecting from her wardrobe a pretty muslin, flowered with pale sprigs of heliotrope, with soft laces falling about the neck and sleeves, and tying about her delicate waist a dark blue sash, the exact shade of her eyes, her simple but becoming toilette was soon complete.

The high stepping, spirited horses were not long in conveying her to Ivy Crown, and it was with the happiest and lightest heart that she hailed her near approach.

On the terrace Millie was awaiting her, who, after greeting her affectionately, said, "Everybody on the place but grandmamma and I are at the tennis grounds, and as Gerry is one of the players they are no doubt having a fine game; would you like to go down and see the game out?"

"I would, indeed; shall we start now?"

"Not for a little while yet; to tell the truth, Rosa, I was expecting Edgar to come by before I left the house, but it seems as if he is not going to put in an appearance after all."

A look of disappointment crossed the pretty piquant face of the girl while she spoke, and a little sigh escaped her, which Rosalind did not fail to observe.

After lingering a few moments the two made their way to the tennis grounds. Millie chatting gayly as they sauntered slowly along, but not again referring to Edgar Wilkerson. Upon arriving at their place of destination the game had so nearly ended as to leave only Mrs. Por-



ter and Gerald in the field of contest. Both were skilled players, and as the combat continued the interest grew intense. The question as to who would be the winner was a puzzling one, indeed. However, it came to an end at last, Mrs. Porter coming off victorious; whereupon she was greeted with loud shouts of applause by the gentlemen, while the ladies seemed more inclined to regret Gerald's defeat. As to the pretty widow, she had never appeared to greater advantage than upon this occasion. Her tennis suit, a perfection of art, sat jauntily and becomingly upon her well developed figure, while a flush of unusual brilliancy suffused her cheeks, adding lustre to her lovely brown eyes and a new charm to her fair face. Aware of the admiration she had excited, not alone through her proficiency in the art of lawn tennis, but the effect of her bewildering beauty, she continued the graceful pose she had assumed; swinging her racket in one white jeweled hand and lazily fanning herself with the other, she acknowledged the ringing plaudits of the masculines with dainty little inclinations of her well-poised head, accompanied by the very sweetest smile.

Rosalind was perfectly obvious of the exceeding charms that possessed the widow, and felt completely fascinated while observing her beauty and elegance. She recognized the fact also that she was of a different creation from herself, having been nurtured by the flattery and adulation of the world; a woman, too, who was fully conscious of the power and influence she could wield over men, while on the other hand Rosalind was as ignorant of such arts as an infant, whose personal endowments were due



alone to her natural beauty and cultured mind. While she stood there looking admiringly at the pretty woman, her reverie was put to an end by Gerald's sudden appearance; having come up in the rear of where Millie and herself were standing, she was not aware of his close proximity until his pleasant voice sounded on her ear. A flush overspread the lovely face of the girl while she replied to his greeting, and in spite of her effort to appear calm, her hand trembled visibly when Gerald clasped it.

"What in the world did you let Mrs. Porter beat you for?" asked Millie, as soon as he had passed the compliments of the day with Rosalind.

"Well, little girl, to answer your question I have only to ask another; tell me pray how was I to avoid getting beaten? I did my best at playing, and now when I come here under the shadow of your wing for sympathy, it seems that I am to receive censure instead," he replied, in a tone of mock gravity, seating himself beside the two girls.

Before Millie could reply Gerald turned to Rosalind and continued the subject by saying, "However, since Millie fails to condole with me, I hope that you, Miss Morton, will at least have a word of comfort to offer."

"Why certainly, Mr. Underwood, I do not think you need despair, and truly hope that your next attempt at lawn tennis will be a more successful one," Rosalind replied, assuming the same tone of semi-seriousness that Gerald had employed.

"Thank you; that sounds comforting, indeed, and I very much appreciate your sympathy. Millie is a very



good little sister, but always manages to say the wrong thing to soothe."

"But I have known gentlemen who were so gallant that they would not allow themselves to win a game, even when all the chances were in their favor, if their opponent happened to be a lady," asserted Rosalind, with a mischievous smile.

At this unexpected, but pointed raillery, Gerald appeared somewhat disconcerted, but, after a few minutes silence, said:

"You understand lawn tennis, I believe, Miss Morton?"

"Yes, I believe I do, though I never saw it played before, but to amuse me, papa taught me the rudiments of the game, and would often play it with me at the parsonage," Rosalind explained, in her straightforward manner. And it was plain to Gerald that Rosalind understood how it had happened that Mrs. Porter had come off victorious. Her quick intelligence had readily detected the little ruse he had practiced in giving her the opportunity of winning; but she was not aware that this had been done, not so much through a sense of gallantry as for the purpose of terminating the game as speedily as possible, that he might seek her out. Rosalind was not vain enough to interpret his actions in this wise, and, in the innocence of her heart, believed that he being the loser, was alone due to his chivalrous nature.

"I wish Gerry would go and talk to some of the others, for I want you all to myself this afternoon," whispered Millie, as she sat clasping and reclasping Rosalind's hand; but ere Gerald could divine that he had become detrop in



the charming society of these two, a carriage was seen approaching. It was a handsome equipage, driven by a coachman in livery and at once attracted the attention of the company, causing them to look curious as the vehicle drew near. Rosalind, too, felt some curiosity regarding the new comers, but did not inquire who they were. They were all just in the act of starting from the tennis ground, and Judge Underwood—who had been an interested spectator during the game—went forward to meet the visitors, taking a seat in their carriage to escort them to the house.

“Goodness gracious!” exclaimed Fred, coming up to the trio; “if it ain’t the masher.” But, receiving a look of reprimand from Gerald, he did not venture another syllable.

“That is Mr. and Mrs. Norton, who reside in the neighborhood,” explained Gerald. “Have you ever met them?” he asked, addressing Rosalind.

“No, I believe not; Aunt Vilinda doesn’t visit much; consequently she receives but few visitors.”

“Well, you needn’t want to meet her, for she is about the queerest bird I ever happened to run across, and most dreadfully stuck on herself,” said Millie to Rosalind, sotto voce.

By this time the party had about reached the house, and Judge Underwood had assisted the lady to alight, and was ushering her in the midst of the other guests, after the true style of a Kentuckian, introducing them in his most hospitable manner. As the new guest came in full view, Rosalind mentally agreed with Millie in regard to



the lady being a queer bird, for she certainly appeared an oddity, indeed! A faded, washed-out blonde, of diminutive size and uncertain age, whose attempt at artificial make-up and girlishness of attire, made her an object of comment and ridicule, this was the vision that dawned upon the curious company. However, she was far from being abashed upon meeting the amused glances that were leveled at her; on the other hand, she was perfectly self-confident, and wore with the greatest complacency the adjustable smile she had put on for this special occasion, while, in a loud, shrill voice, she acknowledged the introductions of her host. Norton was a good-looking young man, who appeared ten years his wife's junior, and was as much embarrassed and at a loss for words as she was self-assured and voluble—growing redder in the face at each moment, and pulling nervously at his gloves as the Judge proceeded with the introductions. It was but too evident that, in spite of the pains Judge Underwood was taking to impress upon all present that the new arrivals were in every way worthy of their consideration, it was no easy matter for them to stifle their amusement and act with proper civility, for Mrs. Norton's self-conceit and effusiveness of manner appeared more ridiculous still, when compared with the awkwardness of her husband. But good manners and good policy at last prevailed, and all assumed an air of respectful attention, while the loquacious woman continued to call the notice of the rest of the company to herself individually.

“How is your mother, Judge?” she questioned, with one of her most catching glances; then, without waiting



to hear the pleasant response, she went on: "Don't you know that it took a lot of coaxing to get Tom to bring me over here? You see, Judge, he thinks because your mother is an old lady, and your daughters are young ladies, that it don't suit for me to come here, as if I weren't young, too; and I tell him if I am married I feel just as young as any of the single ones, and like young folks' company just as well as ever I did. But Tom is so different from me, and expects me to settle down into an old sober-sides like himself, but catch me doing it;" and Mrs. Norton, after thus delivering her matrimonial views, stopped to draw breath, and looked pathetically around to find the sympathy, in which she believed she stood so much in need, expressed upon some face among the masculines.

"Certainly, certainly!" agreed the Judge, hardly knowing how to answer her appeal.

Edwin Townsend, seeing that Judge Underwood had not given her a satisfactory reply, at this moment came to the rescue by saying, in a tone intended to sound serious:

"Why, how could Norton expect any one, so charmingly young as yourself, to settle down in that kind of fashion? I'm surprised at him. It does seem that he ought to know that it would be perfectly impossible for you to do so at your tender age."

"It does, indeed," reiterated Henry Courts, assuming a grave countenance.

At this unexpected intercession on the part of the cadets every one but poor Norton were almost dying to laugh. Mrs. Norton, however, was delighted at having thus far



succeeded in making such favorable impressions upon the gentlemen, and, feeling convinced within her own mind that the young ladies were frantic with jealousy, became more self-possessed at each moment. Ere long Norton, seeming unable to bear the strain upon his nerves longer, proposed going, and this opened the way for his wife to begin with her profuse invitations.

All the ladies except Hetty attempted to make her a civil answer, promising to return her visit if possible; but just as she turned to Hetty for the purpose of inviting her also, Gerald interrupted the lady by saying, "I am afraid we will none of us have the pleasure of coming over, from the fact that we are leaving here in about a week or ten days; however, we will not be absent longer than a month, and upon our return will remember to repay your visit."

"Is that so? and where in the world are you going now?" asked the visitor, her shrill tones expressive of much curiosity.

"We will go direct to Niagara Falls, I think, madam, at which point we will decide where we will further extend our tour."

"Well, I only wish I had known about you going there sooner; I always wanted to see them falls, and have teased Tom not a little to take me there, but he never would."

"We would have been truly delighted to have had yourself and husband to accompany us, and I am indeed sorry it is too late to urge you to do so," interposed Edwin, in a tone of regret, the reward of which was one of



the lady's most beaming glances, at the same time saying, impressively, "I am so much obliged to you all, but it's too late, for I couldn't get ready to make the trip shorter than two weeks' time; but maybe we will come yet before you all leave; I think Tom ought to take me somewhere; he was dead set on marrying me, and now he never wants me to go anywhere at all; I tell him he's afraid I will see somebody better looking than he is and fall in love with them is the reason why he wants me to stay at home all the time; men are so jealous, you know."

During this disgusting speech of Mrs. Norton's the husband kept his eyes fixed upon the ground, shifting his position every few minutes uneasily, in the meanwhile drawing out his pocket handkerchief and mopping the perspiration from his brow for the twentieth time at least. He seemed much relieved, however, when she at last ended her remarks and moved towards her carriage.

"Don't be surprised if you see us up there," she called back as they were starting off, while she smiled her adieus upon the two cadets, and then the coupe passed down the broad avenue of pines and was soon lost to view.

No doubt many would have been the comments that followed this unprepossessing twain had it not been such pronounced and extremely bad taste; hence for some little while after the departure of the couple nothing was said about them. And then it was Hetty, whose lips had been curled in the most exquisite scorn during the whole time of the Nortons' stay, who broke the silence by saying, tartly:

"I shall never cease to wonder what law requires that



such as that woman should be tolerated, or in other words, why it becomes necessary for what is termed good society to receive such shoddy people on an equal footing; papa, did you invite the Nortons here?"

"I suppose I must plead guilty, Henrietta, I did; and since I have given offense by so doing, I will now offer an apology; I went over to see Norton, not long since, on a matter of business his father had entrusted to my care, and it so happened that I was detained until their high-noon dinner, hence I could not do otherwise than accept of their hospitality; under these circumstances what could I do but ask them over? Besides, Henrietta, Tom's father is one of my best friends, and as far as the family is concerned, there is no bluer blood in Kentucky than that of the Norton's. But truly misfortunes sometimes happen in the best of families, and such it was with this one; would you believe it that the father of that great clumsy looking fellow is one of the brightest men belonging to our section of country?" continued the Judge, addressing himself to the company. "But unfortunately for him, as well as the son, there has been a mesalliance, which fact has no doubt already occurred to you all before this; and it came about in this wise: Tom was sent to Philadelphia to college, for the old man tried every means possible to make something out of him, he being his only son, and heir to his large estate. While there, however, he boarded with a widow, who had a daughter, and the poor fellow was too weak to resist the cunning of the two women, consequently became their victim. But the poor fellow is more to be pitied than blamed in this



case, as he was always of a timid nature and not overly bright. This marriage proved a great blow to the father, and caused him to think seriously of disinheriting his son, but upon further consideration he turned over the old homestead to Tom, and placed a large bank account at his disposal. Then, completely disheartened and thoroughly disgusted, he settled up his business and went abroad. But this is only one example out of a hundred thousand of the ill results of a mesalliance."

Then, as if wishing to dismiss the subject altogether, Judge Underwood lighted a cigar and relapsed into silence. The afternoon was waning, but still the golden sunlight, the endless columns of green trees, and great patches of roses, leaf and blossom seemed smiling in the warmth and glory of the eventide radiance. They had all continued to sit under the shade of the gigantic old trees, since their return from the tennis grounds, enjoying the balmy stillness and peaceful beauty that enshrouded them. Only Millie and Rosalind had wandered away, and now the two had become lost to view by the intervening shrubbery.

"It was so good of you to come," said Millie, placing her arms about Rosalind as soon as they were out of sight of the others and giving her an affectionate kiss. "You see, we are all going to Niagara Falls, and some other places, perhaps, to be absent about a month, I believe, and papa instructed me this morning to invite you to make one of the party; our dressmaker is here from Louisville, and she can have any orders filled for you that would be necessary, so you see you could get



ready on short notice; she takes our measure and a note of what we want, and puts a dozen to work on them, consequently they are returned to us in a week or ten days after she has been here; but I have told you enough about the arrangements, and now I want to know if you think you can go?"

"I should enjoy it above all things, but I cannot say until I have seen Aunt Vilinda about it; when do you expect to start?"

"Some time in about two weeks; we haven't decided upon the day yet, tho' Gerry gave Mrs. Norton to understand we would go much sooner, fearing she would propose to go with us. Talk about cheek!"

"I am sorry for her, Millie, she seems so ignorant."

"Well, in her case ignorance is certainly bliss, so you need not waste your pity upon her, for, as papa would say, it is like casting pearls before swine; but that is not all I have to tell you, so listen for something that lies near my heart. Edgar is coming here this evening; in fact, he ought to have been here some hours ago, for Gerry left word that he should come on down to the tennis grounds, so I know Gerry had his promise to come, and I am therefore still expecting him. I have scarcely had a chance to speak to him since I saw you, and if he comes over this evening I want you to give him this," Millie said, slipping a delicately tinted missive in Rosalind's hand. "We will all go out for a walk after dinner, and I will manage to throw you and him together."

Rosalind took the letter, and after observing its bulky appearance concealed it in the bosom of her dress.



"It is an enormous size, I know," explained Millie, "but not half as much as I would like to have said to him. By the way, did you hear what papa said about a mesalliance?" asked Millie, abruptly.

"Yes, I heard him; he seems to think that no good ever results from an unequal marriage, and I think you should be guided by his better judgment."

Millie sighed, then assuming a bantering tone, said:

"But I must not let you lecture me this evening, nor tell me my duty toward papa; I know too well what it is, but in this case love is stronger than reason, and so it would be a useless task."

Before Rosalind could form a reply horses' hoofs were heard coming up the drive, and through the boughs of evergreen they saw Edgar Wilkerson ride up to the house and alight.

In a moment Millie's face was aglow with smiles and bright blushes, and her voice was tremulous with emotion when she said:

"We will not go in just yet, but continue our walk; Gerry is there to receive Edgar, and papa is there also, and that argus-eyed widow is there, too, whom papa and Hetty think so perfect, and who is trying her level best to get Gerry stuck on her; oh, there it is again, and I do hope you will excuse me for using that horrid slang, at least Gerry thinks it so, but as far as I am concerned I find it very convenient, though I promised him to break myself of it."

"Certainly, Millie, I excuse you, but you ought indeed to break yourself of a habit so displeasing to your brother," Rosalind said, kindly.



And now the sultry July day, that had been so full of ovely lights and shadows, was closing over Ivy Crown—in the west could be seen the beautiful sapphire glow of a summer sunset that the many windows of the old mansion caught up and reflected in dazzling effect, throwing long, slanting rays of gold athwart the magnificent, outstretching grounds, and making them appear like undulating waves of billowy green. Upon the windless air was borne the perfume of many rare flowering plants, while no sound, save the musical flow of the fountains, broke the quiet that reigned supreme. Away in the distance, sunk deep in clover sweet, could be seen the cows coming lazily homeward. For some moments the two girls stood with clasped hands, gazing upon the grandeur and beauty that lay before them; then, almost simultaneously exclaimed, “How beautiful.”

“Yes, gloriously beautiful,” Rosalind repeated, enthusiastically. “What a happy girl you ought to be, Millie, with your many friends and lovely home and surroundings. In all my life I have never known any girl so perfectly blessed as yourself,” said Rosalind, as they walked slowly homeward.

“Well, I suppose I am about as happy as the most of people, especially when you are here with me, and somebody else not far away. Of course you know of whom I am speaking,” returned the spoiled child, gayly.

On reaching the house they found all the family and guests assembled in the diningroom, and every one present appeared in the best of spirits. Gerald came forward to meet them, and conducted them to seats at the



table, sitting between them, and directing his conversation to both at the same time. Mrs. Porter sat opposite the trio, and from under her long lashes was keenly observant of what was going on. The many little attentions Gerald bestowed upon Rosalind caused her to suffer renewed qualms of jealousy of the most intense order; but she had too much tact to betray her feelings, and, knowing, too, that it would only be by dint of friendliness towards Rosalind that she would be able to retain Gerald's good will, the skilled diplomatist smiled sweetly upon her rival and expressed her pleasure at again seeing her at Ivy Crown. In spite of the growing dislike of the widow for Rosalind, she could not avoid studying the lovely girl on every occasion of their meeting. This was done with a view of finding faults, which a less critical observer than herself would have perhaps failed to discover. Having learned through Millie that she had been brought up in a village parsonage, Mrs. Porter expected—aye, hoped—to find a certain awkwardness and lack of knowledge—especially pertaining to the niceties and formalities of table etiquette did she think to find her remiss; instead, however, she found her not deficient in any of these things, and moreover, particularly easy and graceful in every movement. It was most incomprehensible to the woman, who had, all her life, been studying these little arts and devices, which add so much to the charms of woman, how it was possible for one who had no practical knowledge of the conventionalities of society, to so readily adapt herself to such. Mrs. Porter had not learned the simple fact that good manners are



born of good blood and good breeding, and that all the conventional garnish in the world could not add one iota of charm to a pure minded cultured girl. Thus it was that Rosalind was as enigmatical to the fine lady as she was problematical to the orphan.

The evening in question was far too warm for the party to linger long over the dinner table, hence as soon as it was possible, after the many different courses had been served, every one quitted the table and sought the open air—the ladies grouping themselves upon the terrace, laughed and talked nonsense, and appeared very pleased and happy, while the gentlemen scattered promiscuously about. A full moon had risen, and was diffusing a sweet mellow light over the flowers, fountains, and marble statuary, which, in the shifting moonbeams, gleamed like supernal spirits. The forest beyond lay in cool, dense shadow, and the air was fragrant with verdure and bloom.

“What a lovely evening,” said Gerald, approaching the group, accompanied by Edgar Wilkerson.

“Yes, indeed! far too lovely to remain indoors, hence we have all come out to enjoy its beauty,” said Mrs. Porter, with a bewitching smile.

“And why didn’t you say, ‘to take a moonlight stroll?’” put in Millie; then playfully added, “Why don’t some of you gallant young men offer to escort the ladies for a walk?”

“I see no reason why, unless it is that we are all too timid,” said Edwin Townsend, who had joined the party in time to hear Millie’s remark, at the same time offering Nellie his arm.



Upon this Henry Courts turned about to look for Nettie, and seeing that she and Millie had linked arms, he begged to escort them both. Hetty asked to be excused, and returned to the parlor with the Hon. Mr. Barton, for the purpose of playing a new opera. Gerald was in the act of proffering his services to Rosalind, but seeing her moving away with Edgar Wilkerson, and that Mrs. Porter was without an escort, there was nothing else for him to do but to offer her his arm.

And so it was that they were all paired off, Nellie looking unutterably content hanging upon the arm of young Townsend, while Millie and Nettie were endeavoring, with all their powers of fascination, to keep Henry's eyes from wandering in the direction of the pretty coquette.

Rosalind, knowing full well why Millie had suggested the walk, engaged Edgar's attention at once, who, on seeing Millie in company with Henry, asked that he might accompany her.

The situation was not only unpleasant, but embarrassing in the greatest degree to Rosalind, but wishing to accomplish her mission as quickly as possible and thereby relieve her mind of the disagreeable obligation she had taken upon herself, she picked up courage and as soon as they had passed out of hearing of the others, said:

"Let us go to the little rose bower at the terminus of the walk, I have a message for you, Mr. Wilkerson."

It seemed that the young man divined who the message was from, for a pleased smile played about his lips and an eager expectant glance darted from his handsome dark eyes upon receiving this assurance.



As soon as the two reached the place designated Rosalind handed him the letter, and noted that he received it with as much eagerness as a child would display upon being the recipient of a new toy, then hastened to the entrance way, where by the light of the moon he could peruse its precious contents.

While Edgar was thus engaged Rosalind sat down upon the rustic seat within, and through some unknown cause a great weight at her heart was oppressing her. Then she fell to pondering over the part she was playing in this *affaire d'amour*, and told herself that she should not have yielded to Millie's wishes, tho' it severed their friendship by refusing to comply; better that than to feel that she was encouraging her to disobey her father.

Thus she was soliloquizing when Edgar approached her; extending his hand, he said, earnestly:

"Allow me to thank you, Miss Morton, for undertaking such a hazardous task as being the bearer of communications of this kind between Millie and myself; but I fear it is not exactly honorable in me to accept this method, for no matter how much pleasure it would afford me to receive these very dear little tokens of her regard, the thought that she might be laying herself liable to her father's anger, and that you, too, may be compromised, would be the source of much anxiety to me, hence I am at a loss what to do, or how to advise Millie, and would be glad to have your views on the subject?"

"I really do not know how to advise you, Mr. Wilkerson, and it seems that Millie does not wish to listen to reason, but chooses to go her own way, but you should



consider her interest in the matter and tell her how wrong it is to go contrary to her father's wishes. But as far as I am concerned I am not afraid of being compromised."

"I am indeed grateful for what you have so generously done for me," returned Edgar, "and hope you will not cherish any conscientious scruples about the matter, for you know it is said that everything is fair in love and war."

Before Rosalind could reply, a low, musical laugh floated to them, and the forms of Mrs. Porter and Gerald passed from out of the shadow of the rustic bower into the moonlight. So earnestly had the two been speaking that they had failed to observe the approaching parties, and were totally unprepared for their sudden appearance upon the scene. Without being aware of his own actions, Edgar had continued to hold Rosalind's hand while he spoke, and his tones had in them an emotional depth which might have been termed lover-like. Mrs. Porter had intuitively foreseen what Millie's object was—to throw Rosalind and Edgar together, and had watched to see what direction they had taken, having intentionally drawn Gerald towards the spot, and, though this unexpected encounter appeared to him as purely accidental on the part of Mrs. Porter, as to himself, it was not so; for with her it had been a ruse to aid her in dethroning Rosalind in Gerald's estimation, which had proved successful beyond her most sanguine hopes. It seemed that fate had indeed played into the widow's hands, for truly nothing could have better served her purpose than finding the two in the position that she had. Of course she understood



the situation, and could easily decipher that Millie was the subject of their earnest discussion, but Gerald had not the least idea of what was going on, or that Millie had ever given Edgar Wilkerson a thought. So Mrs. Porter had all unexpectedly obtained a clew, and now had only to follow it up. Appearances on this evening had shown Rosalind and Edgar to Gerald in the light of lovers, and now everything with her was *comme il faut*.

“There, didn’t I just tell you this was a night for lovers, and what could have more truly verified my words than the scene we have just witnessed?” she asked, in a tone of banter.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE FETE.

FOR some moments after having witnessed this scene—which to the most indifferent looker-on would have appeared lover-like—Gerald was speechless with wonderment. He could hardly believe what he had seen was real, and thought he must be laboring under some optical delusion. But Mrs. Porter's light remark recalled him to the fact that what he had seen was a startling reality. "I'm sorry for this seeming intrusion," he muttered, more to himself than to his companion; then he felt that he must get away from the sight of the spot as quickly as possible, and he hurried along, regardless of the fact that Mrs. Porter was clinging to his arm, and he was taking such long strides as to render her unable to keep pace with him. Upon reaching the house he pulled nervously at his watch as soon as they had entered the hallway, and stammered some excuse about something that he was compelled to do, then bid the lady goodnight, and hastily sought his room. Once within its sacred walls, he threw himself in a chair and tried to think and reason and thus recover from his agitation. "What does it mean?" he asked himself time and again, "that this girl, whom he had learned to regard as a paragon of goodness and purity, should be meeting Edgar Wilkerson at Ivy Crown. Is it for the purpose of hearing his avowals of love that brings her here?" Such it appeared truly,



judging from what he had so accidentally seen and overheard. This much had fallen distinctly upon his ear:

“‘I fear it is not really honorable in me to accept this method,’” Edgar had said, and then added something about compromising her. And Rosalind had answered that she was not afraid of being compromised, after having said something else in a lower tone, to which Edgar had replied, “‘that everything was fair in love and war.’”

All this had fallen upon Gerald's ear while engaged in disentangling Mrs. Porter's skirts from a tenacious rose-bush with which they had come in contact.

Again the scene arose before him: the pretty little bower, fragrant with the climbing roses; the moonlight radiance falling upon Rosalind, who appeared almost ethereal, clad in the delicate muslin, with her pure, pale profile turned towards him, while she looked up at Edgar Wilkerson and replied to him in that calm, unmoved tone; and young Wilkerson standing there, with a halo of tenderness about his face, holding Rosalind's hand, apparently pledging to her his faithfulness. After all, could it be possible that he had over-estimated this girl and was to find himself deceived in her? That Rosalind had acquired a great and growing influence over him he was now thoroughly convinced, and not until he had had testimony of another wooing her was he aware how deeply rooted had become his own regard. The estimate he had placed upon her did not admit of her being a girl who would deliberately practice the art of deceiving, and, to all appearances, it seemed that she was not only carry-



ing on a clandestine courtship with Edgar Wilkerson, but at the same time, in the most exquisitely feminine way encouraging him, also. It was intensely painful to him to believe in even the possibility of such being the case, for Rosalind had not only impressed him as being one of the most beautiful of women, but he had also deemed her as good as she was beautiful, for with him *la beaute sans vertu est une fleur sans parfum*. And thus it was that all the romance of his nature had clothed her with the idealic qualities of pure and lovely womanhood. Until he met Rosalind he believed that he had outlived all his youthful imagination, but it was a mistaken idea; and now, having fully awakened to the fact of what she had become to him, he finds that this queen of roses, whom he had so often thought of as being truly symbolical of her name, was fast becoming a mystery to him, and one that his logical brain could not well analyze. A misgiving, a cruel suspicion was taking hold upon him, and he mentally asked himself how far he had allowed his feelings to mislead him? and to what length he had miscalculated this girl, who, after all his cherished belief in her goodness and high moral character, might have been only acting, while beneath all that gentleness and womanliness she, too, perhaps held cunning and deception?

Thus it was that Gerald reasoned with himself and tried to call to aid all the cynicism that he had been storing up for years, but at the time when he most needed it, he found that day by day it had melted away, and had almost vanished beyond recall.

Yes, it was only too true that during the few months he



had known Rosalind he had builded up within his own heart a temple of purity and beauty, and the saint he had enshrined there, was, after all, only a woman, and one of the kind, too, it appeared, who could sanction clandestine meetings—possibly against the wishes of the good old aunt who had so kindly sheltered her in her lonely and orphaned state. But what right had he to let his personal sentiment—or sentimentality, as he scornfully termed it—come between Rosalind and Edgar, when it was not now possible to retreat from the knowledge that they were something more to each other than mere acquaintances? Then he told himself sadly that he had given himself no right, and realized with bitterness that he had only been dreaming while Edgar was acting. A sense of failure came wearily over him and he grew impatient, aye, indignant, with his weakness, as he chose to term this newly-awakened feeling, especially after having long ago forsworn woman and her power over him, did he lament over his folly.

“And yet it was a happiness within itself to love her,” he murmured, unconscious of the fact that he was giving voice to his thoughts and the inner feelings of his sublime nature.

And so the hours wore on; a clock in some distant part of the house echoed and re-echoed through the silence. It was midnight; yet still he sat there gazing out on the starlit scene, thinking deeply. A great weariness came over him—a vague but sincere regret settled upon his heart; and while he recounted the incidents of the past months, and what had that evening transpired, he told



himself over and over that he was a fool, who, after seeing life in all its phases and schooling himself with the idea that people were the same the world over, and that love, too, was only imagination, experienced in all its magnitude only by the young and unsophisticated. Now, upon this self-examination, he finds that all these ideas have drifted away from him, and in the desert place of his heart has developed this oasis—the true affection of his nature having resumed sway over him and emphatically asserted its dominion. Viewing Gerald from an emotional standpoint, it is evident that he was a man not only possessed with intellect, character and high moral culture, but a heart also.

“After all I am only human,” he mentally concluded as he saw the gray gleams of the morning stealing in through the arched casement, and realized that throughout the whole night his lonely vigil had remained unbroken. Then thoroughly exhausted and completely dispirited, he prepared himself for the rest he so much needed.

“With a few hours of sleep I will have shaken off this fearful attack,” he mused as he lay down upon his luxuriant couch.

When Gerald did not make his appearance at the breakfast table on the following morning no one expressed the least surprise, and none but Rosalind attached any importance to his absence; intuitively she divined the reason that he was not there beside her speaking such kindly words, and adding to her life that new and sublime interest which he alone had the power to inspire. Alas! too well she knew the reason why he



had remained away, and her heart felt heavy indeed. Grandmother Underwood noticed her pale cheeks, and pressed her to drink a cup of black coffee and to eat a hot roll, if nothing else; and the poor girl, seeing that Mrs. Porter was observing her more closely than ever upon this morning in particular, also wearing a little sarcastic smile upon her pretty lips, forced herself to eat a little, and also attempted to keep up a lively conversation with Millie, who was planning their dresses and expatiating upon the grand time they were to have while at Niagara.

“Of course you will go, as I intend to go home with you and ask Miss Vilinda myself to let you go with us,” she expounded.

“Well, we had best go this morning, as I will have to send to Louisville for the dresses you have suggested, and a good many other things, hence it is best that my order should go in to-day, as we have but little time for preparations,” Rosalind said, as she rose from the table.

In a short time the two girls were riding towards Morton Place; Millie, intent upon her mission, was gay and talkative, while Rosalind had but little to say and seemed preoccupied with her own thoughts; she was meditating within her own mind whether or not she should tell Millie what had occurred while Edgar and herself were in the rose arbor the night previous, but somehow she felt that it was best to keep as silent on the subject as possible.

After a little persuasion and some coaxing on Millie’s part, Miss Vilinda felt constrained to give her permission



to Rosalind making one of the party, experiencing no little pride in the thought that her grandniece was so much sought after by these elegant people; therefore they were not long in making necessary arrangements, and the order for Rosalind's outfit was also made out and sent at once, it being understood by all concerned that she would make one of the party. No coaxing or persuading could have induced Miss Vilinda or old lady Underwood to act as chaperon to the ladies, as neither of them would have undertaken the journey at their age on any account whatever; so Judge Underwood had consented to escort the party.

"We must have a moonlight fete, or a garden party, or an entertainment of some kind, before leaving Ivy Crown," the Judge had suggested a few days from the time set apart for starting; and every one except Hetty had hailed the idea with delight.

"I think it decidedly bad taste to give an entertainment of any kind without at least ten days notice," remonstrated this very correct damsel.

"Admitting the bad taste, conventionally speaking, it would be still worse—in truth, an unpardonable offense to the neighborhood in general—were we all to leave Ivy Crown again without you ladies having returned the many calls, or in any way manifesting a desire to be sociable. So what better means could be employed to facilitate matters than those I have just named?"

"I think father has taken a reasonable view of the matter, as something is really necessary in the way of an apology to our friends, and I am confident that nothing



would prove a better sedative than throwing open the house and illuminating the grounds and inviting everybody for miles around," said Gerald.

So it was decided that a moonlight fete would be given on the evening prior to their leaving for Niagara. For once at least Hetty's objections had been overruled, and strange to say she made no further protest, but manifested her indifference by taking but little or no interest in the matter of arrangements. However, this had no effect of lessening the zeal of the others, and all went briskly to work, writing cards of invitation, wreathing impromptu arches, and making preparations generally. As Gerald had suggested, everybody for miles around were included in the invitations, even the Nortons and the Wilkersons, though they all were perfectly aware of the fact that none of the latter but Edgar would accept.

The few intervening days passed swiftly by, bringing about the time set aside for the delightful event, and everything went as merrily on as the joyful chimes of wedding bells. Not less beautiful than its predecessors was the evening of the fete, the weather being perfectly adapted to the occasion, and, under the blue, star-bedecked canopy of heaven, Ivy Crown shone out resplendent. Everything pertaining to the grand old place was as lovely as a dream; the house, from basement to garret, had been thrown open, and from every aperture streamed the most brilliant lights. The grounds, too, were radiant with the illumination of many Japanese lamps, the varied shades of which threw a softly subdued light over all, reflecting the fountains with their flashing



sprays, the white statuary, dense clusters of evergreens and blossoming flowers making it appear, indeed, a vision of enchantment. While moving to and fro amidst those rare beauties of art and nature, were joyous groups of various ages, who viewed with delight the lovely scene presented to their admiring eyes, from both within and without. The drawingroom, with its appointments of crimson and gold, and the picture gallery, containing life-sized portraits of the Underwoods for generations back, were no small features in the imposing display, and shone out conspicuously before the enthused spectators of the promenade. The banqueting hall, too, which was only used on the most festive occasions, was thrown open to the dancers, adjoining which was the conservatory. From this the glass doors had been removed, leaving the air odoriferous with the myriad rare exotics blooming therein. All the community for many miles around had received invitations, and everybody, excepting the Wilkersons, had come. And, notwithstanding the fact that Edgar had interceded in behalf of his sisters, the mother was firm in denying them this privilege. "We haint harristocrats, and, what's more, don't want to be. Hits bad enough to hav one of the famly running arter them high-flalutins, let alone the others," she expostulated.

But though Mrs. Wilkerson refused to be patronized by the Underwoods, Mrs. Norton did not; however, she was far too self-confident to understand that she was held in ludicrous derision by all who represented the more refined class of society, and upon this occasion did not fail to put in an appearance, attired, as usual, in a most youth-



ful looking costume, composed of pink mull, with a profusion of ribbons and lace, while poor Norton appeared more ill at ease than ever, wearing a dress suit and tight fitting gloves. And now amid this bewitching scene, while the merry throng assemble within the spacious hall and glide hither and thither to the harmonious strains of the waltz music, let us look around for Rosalind, whom we have not found among the dancers, or rambling amid the beauties of the outer world. But within the recess of the shadowy conservatory, where stately palms are bowing gently to the evening breeze, and the rich perfumes of the myriad flowering plants, rendered doubly sweet by the added scent of the tropical blooms, are wafted to her, we find our heroine sitting alone. The group of oleanders raise their slender heads high above her and scatter their odorous blossoms all about her; still, she seems heedless of their beauty and fragrance. She was perhaps the only one present who did not feel the enlivening influence of the surroundings. Ever since the night two weeks previous to this occasion, when Gerald and Mrs. Porter had found her alone in the rose bower with Edgar Wilkerson, she had noticed a change in his—Gerald's—manner towards her, and this had rendered her very unhappy; not that he had been less kind or respectful—for he was never found lacking in the courtesy due his sisters' guest—but there was a certain restraint and reserve of manner that had not characterized his actions towards her until he had seen her alone with Edgar Wilkerson. She was thinking sadly of this, and wishing that she could explain to him how matters stood, but this she could not do with-



out betraying Millie's secret, and she would suffer anything before she would break her sacred promise to keep the secret that the spoiled child had confided to her, when the oleanders parted, and the object of her thoughts stood before her. The conscious blushes surged into her cheeks as she saw who it was approaching her, and in the embarrassment of the moment she forgot to offer him a seat beside her on the rustic settee. However, he did not seem to observe this, but seated himself opposite her, and said:

“You do not dance, I believe, Miss Morton?”

“Yes, I have danced often while at Brookdale, but not since papa's death; he had been very fond of dancing when a young man, and he taught me to waltz, which no doubt seems strange to you, he being a minister,” she said, interrogatively.

“Yes, according to the code of religious doctrine some ministers preach, where dancing is held up to be something of an almost unpardonable nature, I must admit it appears a little strange,” Gerald answered, thoughtfully.

“But papa's ideas of religion were a little different from the most of ministers; he believed that we were put in this beautiful world to enjoy it, and that the young especially should be joyous and happy, and all that was necessary to insure our safety was to love God, pray to him, and keep his commandments.”

It was wonderful to see how Rosalind brightened up while speaking of her father; it seemed to comfort her and make her forget unpleasant thoughts; then, when she had ceased speaking, she looked away into the distance.



The deep appealing of her large beautiful eyes did not escape Gerald, and he could scarcely resist their pleading; in his heart he longed to ask her to explain the scene he had witnessed in the summer-house, or, in other words, to tell him what Edgar Wilkerson was to her, for at that very moment he felt like there might be some mistake, and asked himself, "Why, if she and Edgar were lovers, was it that he was not with her at that time, for what place could be better suited to lovers than this secluded and lovely spot?" Then it occurred to him that even then she might be awaiting him there, and upon the impulse of the moment he arose and moved towards the door, but seeing Edgar and Millie taking their place for a quadrille, he retraced his steps to the rustic seat occupied by Rosalind.

"I am a fool," he muttered, "to be giving away to such weakness, but I have learned to love her, not alone because of her beautiful saintly face, but more especially for her apparently spotless nature, *omnia vincit amor*. But I must not reveal to her my feelings, and tho' in duty bound to see that she receives every attention due a guest of Ivy Crown, I must at the same time keep a strict guard over my actions and not allow myself to be carried from the bounds of reason by giving away to impulse, and as soon as this trip to Niagara is over I will away from the softening influence of her presence and try to forget that I have ever looked upon her sweet face."

Thus it was that Gerald soliloquized while a profound silence had fallen over the two.

And Rosalind, of what was she thinking during this time?



“He does not care for me any longer,” she was telling herself sadly, “and can scarcely tolerate my presence.”

This was all she comprehended, furthermore she only knew that she suffered. Then her eyes, sadly pathetic, turned full upon him, and in the tender dimness of the place her face resembled that of the picture of a sad-eyed Madonna he had seen while in Rome—a painting of rare workmanship from the brush of one of the old masters, the features of which were touched with a tremulous subtle glow, so lovely, yet so intensely sorrowful. And now the same expression had stolen into the countenance of Rosalind—that of a shadowed pain, lending to the exquisitely molded features the same sad cast and to the eyes the same depth and tender pathos. Gerald caught the expression in its supreme emotion, her eyes sorrowful and appealing, seeking his own, and he was not only impressed with the resemblance between Rosalind and the lovely saint, but the consciousness that this knowledge had acquired for him a new aspect of beauty, causing him to almost forget his resolutions.

A passing zephyr at this moment swept a shower of oleander blossoms over them, wafting to them the odorous breath of the myriad flowering plants with which they were surrounded.

Gerald arose, and calling to aid all of his feigned reserve of manner, said, “These flowers are overpowering in their fragrance, and I feel as tho’ I was stifling; suppose we try this waltz, Miss Morton.”

Without a word of reply Rosalind took his proffered arm, and the two, so near to each other in sympathy, yet



doomed to so soon wander apart, left the cool dim shadows and sweet blooming flowers for the brilliant lights of the ballroom.

The band was playing a most enchanting waltz, and Rosalind and Gerald were soon circling through the mazy dance. It was the first time they had ever danced together, and while Gerald clasped the slender waist of the beautiful girl and looked dreamily past her, not daring to again meet her gaze, Rosalind experienced the most indescribable sensations. Her whole being thrilled under the vibrating touch of his hand with a strange mingling of joy and grief, hope and despair; but to her these feelings were neither elusive or definable. The soft caressing rhythm of the music, full of slumberous passion, roused within her the most intense emotion and touched her like the echo of her own heart, for in the haunting melody she seemed to hear Gerald's voice calling her name in the tenderest accents, and then it appeared that in response the voices of the instruments grew heavy with an untold sorrow. Yielding herself up to these soul-inspiring strains, together with the magnetic influence of Gerald's presence, Rosalind experienced all the enjoyment derived from waltzing, and seemed to float and drift on the flowing tides of melody. The inspiration of the seraphic music, and the soothing realization that Gerald was near her, caused her to abandon herself to the charmed spell and forget for the time being that she was unhappy; and only when, like a deep sighing sob, the harmonies of the refrain sounded, was she recalled from her blissful dream; then Gerald's voice sounded close be-



side her, "Allow me to compliment you, Miss Morton, on your beautiful dancing; I have waltzed a great deal in my more youthful days, but I can truly say I never had a partner who could in the least compare with you."

And tho' he endeavored to speak naturally, his voice was tremulous with emotion.

"Thank you," was all that Rosalind replied, for she had not yet fully awakened from her delicious trance, still his words made her very happy, and caused her cheeks to suffuse with rosy blushes.

"Come, we will go out for a breath of fresh air; have you seen the grounds to-night?" he asked, leading her from the ballroom.

"Only from the house," Rosalind answered, more composedly.

"Then we will go and have a look at them," Gerald returned, speaking more like himself than he had done since the unfortunate occurrence of the rose bower. And while they wandered amidst the sublime beauties without, at this time so richly enhanced by the many floral designs, emblematical of the occasion and radiated by the blending of the soft light of the moon with that of the many colored Japanese lamps, it appeared to Rosalind that she was indeed in realms of enchantment, and she became dumb with admiration, feeling that no words would half suffice to express her delight in viewing a scene so surpassingly lovely. In the brief hour Gerald had spent with her she had been drinking of the waters of Lethe—all her former content having returned to her, and again she was dreaming the sweet dreams that, waking and



sleeping, she had dreamed ever since she had known the man who was then beside her. The tones of his voice, the gentleness of his manner, his superior intelligence—in fact, his every characteristic—had charmed and fascinated her from the first, and this distinctive regard with which he had inspired her had strengthened and intensified with each meeting until, without hope or expectation for the future, every affection of her nature had concentrated and settled upon him. Every phase of this new and beautiful existence was interwoven with thoughts of him, and touched her like divine inspiration, and her sweet spirit, borne upon the wings of enthused imagination, seemed to float upward and commune with the disembodied one of her loved father. Some poet has said, “Love’s words are weak, but not Love’s silence.” And so it was with Rosalind; her heart was too full of happiness to speak.

And while the two roamed from beauty to beauty, Gerald noted her silence, but could not doubt the look of supreme content written upon her classical brow and shining from the loveliest heavenly blue eyes. But he talked on, without appearing to notice how quiet she had become upon all subjects that he thought would be of interest to her, not forgetting again that evening that this lovely girl was a guest of Ivy Crown. And while he talked Rosalind listened—aye, listened as one would listen to catch the notes of far-away music—scarcely daring to breathe, leastwise one little note would be lost upon the ear.

Thus it was that the sweet solitude, the pervading perfume, the distant sounds of harmony, and moreover, the



powerful influence of Gerald's presence, all combined, had the effect of lulling the enthused girl into a state of perfect bliss, her feelings having indeed gathered to culmination.

At last they stopped beside the center fountain to admire the dazzling effect of the different lights upon it, and Rosalind, remembering her long silence, said:

"I do not believe that any other place was ever as beautiful as Ivy Crown."

And at that moment Gerald felt that she had said aright, for nothing could have appeared more complete in grandeur and sublime beauty, and none could have looked on it without becoming enraptured. The soft witching rays of lights, blending their diverse colors athwart the fountain, from which great silvery sprays were ascending and descending in showers of brightest gems, and falling in gentle rhythm upon the calm still air. The water lilies, too, with their snowy petals, seemed slumbering in their cool, sweet bed, adding purity and loveliness to the quiet scene, while every now and then a beautiful white swan, Undine like, rose up from the water, to again submerge into its crystal depths; overhead the sky, a delicate blue, studded by millions of bright stars, while underneath their feet grasses and flowers were mingling their exquisite odors.

Scattered here and there were a number of rustic chairs. After drinking in the supreme beauty of their surroundings for some time, Gerald led Rosalind to one of these, and seating her, sank into another near by.

"I am glad you so much admire my old home; I, too,



think it very lovely, though there are many handsomer ones, or rather supposed to be, from the enormous sums of money that has been expended upon them; but through association I am inclined to think that I prefer Ivy Crown."

"It does not appear to me that its beauty could possibly be excelled. Please do not think me too inquisitive if I ask who was it that planned these lovely grounds?"

"Certainly not," returned Gerald, "the arrangements of the grounds are after my own idea of beauty, which, however, are not of original design, as they are fashioned after a Florentine garden I sketched while in Italy. Of course this is nothing to be compared with the size of the original, but it is a good imitation on a less elaborate scale. The garden from which this one is designed belonged to the villa Costello, which is situated about three miles from Florence, and in my opinion is the loveliest in all Italy."

"What a beautiful land Italy must be! Is it true that during all seasons it is nothing but sunshine and flowers?" Rosalind asked, enthusiastically.

"Yes, quite true; and as far as the climate is concerned, it is a most delightful part of the world; but notwithstanding this, and furthermore, that of its cities of grand architecture and magnificent towers, I would not exchange for all of it the State of dear old Kentucky, for, without a doubt, Italy has more thieves and miserable looking vagabonds than any other country it has ever been my lot to visit. We do not realize the fact that America is the most blessed of all lands until we go abroad, also that the



true born American who comes of good blood and parentage is the most enlightened, the most intellectual, and the most humane of any other nation on the face of the globe; remember I do not include foreigners who for the sake of greed and freedom flock here, but the out and out Anglo-American, when I say that they are the noblest of God's creation."

Some moments of silence followed Gerald's speech, in which Rosalind sat, as if spell-bound, wondering within herself if she were awake or dreaming. The sweet assurance that he had upon this evening preferred her society to that of the beautiful widow's, had little by little come to her as he talked, and, with the echo of his voice still sounding in her ears, she realized that this ought to be sufficient proof of his regard; and after all he had seen in the little rustic arbor, which was to him, of course, inexplicable, he was not entirely disgusted with her. Thus Rosalind was thinking and comparing her present state of felicity to the gloominess that had enshrouded her earlier in the evening, when, turning her head slightly, she let her eyes wander over the grounds. Never had she appeared so serenely beautiful as upon this evening, and knowing this, Gerald had studiously avoided letting his eyes rest upon her, and while they sat there alone—with no sound but the distant music of the ballroom and the splash of the fountain breaking upon the supreme quiet of their surroundings—Gerald did not observe the sudden start and the white pallor that overspread her face. But, from a clump of evergreens not far from the fountain, there had arisen a form, which continued to advance



slowly towards her, at first appearing dim and undefined in the distance, but as it approached nearer and nearer, the girl realized to her horror and dismay that it was no other than the hideous thing that had twice before appeared to her in the midst of these beautiful and classical grounds; and again it was, through floral arches and shadowed lights she saw it creeping, stealthily as a cat, towards her, its sodden eyes and wide mouth leering at her in the same imbecile manner, sickening to behold. In vain did she try to cry out, but her lips refused her utterance, and, in the extremity of the moment, she raised her hands to her face to shut out the dread vision, but they trembled so violently that they dropped into her lap, and intuitively her eyes again sought the spot where the woeful sight had met her gaze. It was not there. In the few moments that had elapsed, the evil thing—the *bete noir* that seemed to haunt her footsteps—had vanished. During the time, Gerald had not once looked towards her, hence had not observed the nervous movement of her hands and startled expression of her eyes; but, hearing a low sound escape her, he looked and saw the deathly hue that had overspread her face, which had replaced the roses that were blooming so brightly upon her cheeks a few moments previous; the whitening lips trembling with the very breath that passed between them, and the fixed look of terror in the expression of her eyes. The next instant he was close beside her, anxiously exclaiming:

“What is the matter, Miss Morton? I fear you are ill; you are as pale as death.”

While he was speaking, Rosalind had gained sufficient



composure to answer him coherently, and, with a faint semblance of a smile, she said:

“Nothing is the matter with me—at least, I am not ill; only a little nervous, I believe; and if you have no objection I would like to go in the house, as I feel a little cold out here,” she added, while a slight but perceptible shiver passed over her.

“By all means; and I must humbly beg pardon for keeping you out in the night air so long,” returned Gerald, regretfully.

“There is no need of that, as I am not afraid of the night air injuring me since I am quite free from ailments, unless it is that I have grown imaginary, or else am gifted with a double vision, either of which, I presume, might be termed a malady,” she said, glancing over her shoulder and again shivering, in spite of her effort to preserve an outward calm.

At that moment they were startled by a prolonged shriek, which broke upon the noiseless air and echoed back from the depths of the forest, sounding more like an enraged and hunted animal than that of a human being, and again the color forsook Rosalind’s face, leaving it of a bloodless and pallid hue, while her agitation became so great that Gerald had to guide her faltering footsteps as he proceeded to conduct her to the house.

“Merciful heaven! what cry was that?” she asked, in a horrified tone, scarcely able to command her voice.

“Don’t let it alarm you; it is nothing that can in any way molest you, and it must have been the same sound that your man-servant, Peter, has been hearing of late,



of which he was telling me a few days since. He claims that there is a wild cat in the forest—lying between Morton Place and Ivy Crown—and since that was the same noise that he described, he must have judged rightly, for there is no doubt but what that was a feline cry.”

When they reached the house Gerald found a quiet place for Rosalind, and hastened to procure her a glass of wine. No sooner had he passed beyond her sight than Mrs. Porter, leaning on the arm of Edgar Wilkerson, looking surpassingly lovely, came up to where she was sitting, and said, in the sweetest of tones, “Found at last; where in the world have you been hiding yourself all the evening? Mr. Wilkerson has been perfectly inconsolable at your loss, and I kindly volunteered my services to assist in searching you out.”

Before Rosalind had time to form a reply, Gerald returned with the wine, arriving on the scene just in time to hear Mrs. Porter’s words regarding the search she and Edgar had been making for Rosalind. Tendering her the wine, he said:

“Since Miss Morton has been somewhat indisposed this evening, you will have to excuse her absence from the ballroom; however, as refreshments are now being served in the diningroom, it is not too late for Mr. Wilkerson to have the pleasure of serving her in some way, so he can attend her to the table, and see that she is waited upon. And as there was no possibility of doing otherwise, Rosalind went with Edgar, leaving Gerald and the adroit schemer alone together.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### AT NIAGARA.

“ Moments there are, and this is one,  
Snatch'd like a minute's gleam of sun  
Amid the black Simoon's eclipse;  
Or like those verdant spots that bloom  
Around the crater's burning lips,  
Sweetening the very edge of doom!  
The past, the future—all that fate  
Can bring of dark or desperate  
Around such hours, but makes them cast  
Intenser radiance while they last ! ”

“ [T is just too bad that we cannot commence our sight-seeing to-day, since the weather is so deliciously cool and everything without looks so inviting,” exclaimed Millie, the next morning after the arrival of the party at Niagara.

Rosalind, Millie, and Nettie Rhea stood by a window of the Clifton House, overlooking Horseshoe Falls.

“ Well, why can't we, I would like to know? I supposed that was what we came here for,” replied Nettie, a little tartly.

“ So we did, but Hetty and Mrs. Porter think it would appear countrified and unfashionable in us not to remain in doors for a day or two at least after we arrive here, or it may be a week, I couldn't say, as I am not acquainted with the etiquette of the place and therefore do not know the exact limits to which we are reduced; as if we were



the least bit tired, and not just dying of curiosity to get a nearer view of that wonderful piece of nature's handiwork, as papa would put it," Millie ended, by assuming the tone of mimic eloquence of her father's, and then breaking into a hearty laugh.

Nettie and Rosalind joined Millie in her mirth, for none could have resisted the bright winsome face before them. Then while Nettie assured her that "she was a born actress and would yet make her fame and fortune on the stage," Rosalind turned again to the window, and was soon lost in deep thought while she stood listening to the rush and roar of the mighty cataract.

None of the party except the three girls had arisen, at least had given no token of having done so, hence Millie and her two friends could do nothing but remain in their room and admire their surroundings from the view afforded them by their windows.

True it was nearly the turn of the night when they had reached Niagara, and the rest of the ladies expected to lie in bed all day, resting from their imaginary fatigue consequent to their journey; Judge Underwood, too, having just turned over for his morning nap, was also uncertain as to when he would arise. However, it was yet quite early—only a quarter past ten; but these young and eager girls were not content to lie in bed for the sake of observing the rules Henrietta had read to Millie; they were not yet so worldly as to sacrifice their natural proclivities upon the altar of that tyrannical deity called conventionality, and long hours ago had been awakened by the vociferous voice of the wonderful falls of Niagara.



Their excursion hither had been altogether a pleasant and leisurely one, having traveled by rail to Cleveland, Ohio, at which point they had taken a steamer up Lake Erie, thus completing their journey. Especially had Rosalind and Millie enjoyed traveling on the water, having spent the most of their time out on the guards or in the pilot house while on board the vessel.

And it had so happened that upon these occasions they were always escorted by Edgar and Gerald. The consequence of this was that Rosalind naturally enough fell to Gerald's care, who, had he not already brought himself to face the possibility of her becoming the wife of Edgar Wilkerson at some not far distant day, would have become cognizant of the fact that this arrangement appeared highly agreeable to both Millie and Edgar. Yet the brother, though a man of profound learning and great intelligence, had nevertheless overlooked this altogether, having never contemplated such a thing as Millie having a lover.

There was one most enviable trait which Gerald possessed; his nature was too loyal and noble to treasure anything like jealousy, and notwithstanding the dismay and disappointment with which he regarded the discovery that Rosalind and Edgar were something more to each other than mere acquaintances, it had awakened within him no trace of this ignoble weakness, though he constantly told himself he would have been better pleased to have felt that she had been provided with a future husband as well-born as herself, and fairly shuddered at the thought of the uncongenial atmosphere of Edgar's home.



But to return to the three girls whom we left longing to loosen their conventional shackles.

Two days were accordingly spent before Henrietta would sanction their going out, for this proud damsel always left the impression wherever she went that she and her party represented the most elite; and no one who saw the Underwoods ever doubted their pre-eminence. Upon the score of Rosalind's personal appearance Henrietta was perfectly satisfied, tho' she did not approve of her impulsiveness of speech at times, still her youthful appearance would excuse any lack of dignity, and her delicate high-bred manner betokened her a true born lady and would supply many other deficiencies.

Thus it was that Henrietta had concluded upon weighing the matter of Rosalind becoming one of their party, and had not had the least cause to regret having given her consent. So it all came about that on the morning of the third day after their arrival Judge Underwood expressed his willingness to accompany them on a trip around the falls.

Rosalind, Millie and Nettie, Gerald, Edgar and Fred were all breakfasting in the diningroom of the Clifton House, when the Judge came in and announced his intentions for the day. As to the other ladies, they preferred to remain at the hotel, Mrs. Porter and Henrietta both claiming slight indisposition, and Nellie Stevenson would not go without them.

Accordingly in a short time the aforesaid members of the party had found a little steamer ready to convey them on their long anticipated journey around the falls; and after



each had donned a rubber suit they went out to look upon and admire the grandest piece of nature's architecture, the most sublime of all the wonders of the universe—Niagara! And while Millie and Nettie were wild with enthusiasm over the sight presented to their gaze, Rosalind was mute with reverential admiration and awe. The grand spectacle, the stupendous roar, the beautiful waters flowing from the seemingly infinite heights was the most sublimely beautiful scene she had ever looked upon, and inspired her with still higher and holier thoughts and aspirations.

After leaving the boat they lingered for some time in Prospect Park admiring its labyrinths of lovely flowers, and planning a series of excursions for the afternoon, among which was "Cave of the Winds," "Hurricane Bridge," "Hermit's Cascade," and many others, all of which would have occupied two or three days, Judge Underwood had laughingly remarked, when Millie, in her childish eagerness, said, enthusiastically:

"And there are all those lovely little islands. Why can we not visit them also this afternoon?"

"The islands are not going to run away; I wonder why it is, Millie, that you are always rattled about everything?" put in Fred, reprovingly.

"How like Mother Eve are all womankind, so curious to taste of all life's surprises and pleasures at once?" said Edgar to Millie, *soto voce*.

"And how like unto Father Adam are all mankind, being ever ready to share with us our curiosity?" retorted Millie, readily, speaking in the same low tone of voice.



There were not a great many guests at this time stopping at the Clifton; at least, it was not overcrowded; hence our party found themselves almost as comfortable as while at Ivy Crown. After becoming installed, the ladies felt free to promenade about the halls and verandas; and while Millie and Nettie employed much of their time in this way, Rosalind would find a quiet little nook, where she could while away an hour reading, or, more often, listening to the sounding rhythm of the falls. Sometimes, too, she would sit where she was unobserved, and make a character study of the different faces that passed and repassed her; and to one of her quick intelligence, it was not a difficult matter to classify these strange people. One thing she noticed particularly, that the most elegant and refined of these visitors—or, as Fred would have termed them, the swell people of the land—were the most quiet and unassuming, in both dress and manners, avoiding display, and in their going and coming attracting as little attention as possible. While on the other hand she beheld many just to the contrary, who, through some means, had become the possessors of money, fine clothes, and jewelry of elaborate setting, all of which they seemed determined to impress upon the minds of others as their actual belongings. For this class she felt a profound pity, as well as an utter disgust. By comparison, she fully comprehended that all comprising the party of Judge Underwood were decidedly of the most elegant and well-bred type; and to her refined nature, this knowledge imparted a sense of supreme gratification.



It was on the afternoon of the fourth day subsequent to their arrival that Rosalind sat alone by one of the parlor windows. She had been reading *Evangeline*, Longfellow's most beautiful and pathetic poem, and the sad fate of the idealized maiden, as pictured by the poet, had so seriously impressed her that she had closed the volume and was trying to divert her thoughts into a more cheerful channel by watching the arrival of some new guest. It was nearly five o'clock, and up to this hour had rained incessantly—all day long—thus rendering it impossible for any of them to venture out of the hotel, much less upon the excursions they had planned for the day; and while Mrs. Porter, Henrietta, and Nellie, assisted by the Hon. Percy Barton and the two cadets, had engaged their time playing authors, Millie, Nettie, and Rosalind, had enlivened the hours with music, having played and sung all Judge Underwood's favorite songs. Fred, too, had come in for his share of amusement, and had doubtless enjoyed his so-termed scraps with Millie and Nettie more than anything else, judging from the frequent altercations that had taken place between the three. Later on, however, Rosalind had managed to steal away from the others and screened herself from observation within a recess of a window, which, from contact with the damp mistiness of the atmosphere, glowed sombrely, darkening the outlook so confusedly that she could not penetrate it. The room, too, appeared close to suffocation; altogether, making it necessary to raise the window. Upon doing so, she felt much refreshed, and at once gave herself up to her old habit of day-dreaming. An hour had



passed while Rosalind rested in this comparative calm, listening to the thunder of the gigantic cataract, the indefinable influence of which lulled her senses into the most exquisite languor and repose; then the sound of footsteps, coming from the rear end of the veranda, fell upon her ear—steps that she had learned to distinguish from all others were advancing towards her. Not only was she convinced by the sound that it was Gerald who was drawing near, but she also felt that subtle warning of his presence, and though she had not seen him, the perceptions of the soul, swift, mysterious and unerring had already acknowledged his approach. All that day she had been asking herself where was he, for she had not seen him once during those long hours, and intuitively she leaned forward to get a passing glimpse of him, when, to her dismay and dire confusion, the poem fell to the floor of the veranda, right at his feet. Bending forward he picked up the volume, and was in the act of replacing it in the window when he discovered its owner, and, bowing in his easy, graceful manner, said:

“Beg pardon, Miss Morton, for wishing to intrude, but, with your permission, I shall be most happy to share your solitary retreat.”

“Why, certainly, Mr. Underwood; come in, by all means, if it will afford you any pleasure,” Rosalind replied, endeavoring to appear calm and collected; but in spite of her effort to do so, the rosy blushes covered her cheeks and her heart was beating loudly while she made room for him beside her.

“You know it is said that misery likes company,” she added, half seriously.



“I hope I am not to understand from that that you have been miserable?” he asked in the same tone of semi-seriousness.

“Not exactly, though I must confess that, not only the gloom of the day, but the poem I have been reading impressed me seriously, or rather made me, what is commonly termed, blue.”

“I see it is Longfellow’s most pathetic poem, *Evangeline*; did the fact of our being on the Canada side suggest to you this reading?”

“Yes; that was why I selected it—history having pointed us to the fact that Canada was truly the Acadian land, which Longfellow has so beautifully described.”

“Longfellow has indeed most touchingly and beautifully described the Acadians as the happiest and most prosperous of people at the time they were driven out, and it seems that it was as hard for them to have to give up their lovely possessions as it was for our foreparents to be driven from the Garden of Eden. In regard to *Evangeline*, some critic has complained that Longfellow’s idea of making a martyr of a French woman, as he did of *Evangeline*, was erroneous; since the French are naturally frivolous and pleasure-loving people, and while their fickleness is the most predominant characteristic of their nature, the poet has imbued his heroine with more constancy than a dozen women would have exercised under any circumstances. But this critic should have remembered that the idealized maiden was represented by the poet as belonging to the simple-minded country folks who were not acquainted with le beau monde Paris; tho’ their lands



were rich and yielded abundantly and they were blessed with plenty, still they continued in their plain manner of living, Evangeline having no higher aspiration than to attend to her home duties and await the coming of her lover, altogether far too natural to be fickle. After all, I am inclined to think that the simple, unpretentious life, is by far the happiest," Gerald added, sadly; and Rosalind not only noticed how serious his tone had become, but she saw, too, the old look of weariness and disgust written upon his face.

"Nature intended you for a poet," she said, involuntarily. "You do not care any more for wealth and social position than a hermit of the mountains. If it were not so, why should you be dissatisfied and unhappy?"

"I am not, literally speaking, but I have seen the world in all its phases, and have found more contentment among the unpretentious country people than any other class, they are not puzzling over problematical questions or reaching out for anything beyond their crude comprehensions; their ideas are concentrated upon the simple routine of their everyday life. What could be more sublime, or accord more perfectly with the evening, when the peaceful rest that would follow the labor of the day would come, than these lines of Longfellow, which are descriptive of the hour?"

'Now recommences the reign of rest and affection and stillness.

Day with its burdens and heat had departed and twilight descending,

Brought back the evening star to the sky, and the herds to the homestead.

Foremost, bearing the bells, Evangeline's beautiful heifer,



Proud of her snow-white hide and ribbon that waved from her collar,  
Quietly paced and slow, as if conscious of human affection.  
Lowling of cattle and peals of laughter were heard in the farm-yard,  
Echoed back by the barns. Anon they sank into stillness;  
Heavily closed with jarring sound, the valves of the barn doors  
Rattled the wooden bars, and all for a season was silent.'

"But I must not weary you longer by having you listen to me recite. I fear I have already taxed your patience beyond endurance, and humbly ask your forgiveness," Gerald ended, by saying apologetically.

"Indeed, you have not; please go on—I would never tire of listening," Rosalind replied, eagerly.

"I will read the poem to you sometime, if you desire it, but I cannot repeat any more of it at present, as I only remember portions of verse here and there, and recited them promiscuously, as you doubtless observed."

While they talked the rain had ceased, and now the light of a golden sunset touched the veranda, and, in slanting rays, rested upon the face of the speaker, irradiating it with a tranquil glory.

"How I wish he was happy always and discontent would never come to him," Rosalind mentally soliloquised, as she noted the peaceful expression that illumined his countenance; then added, "If I could only make him happier, no sacrifice would be too great."

At this inopportune moment, Fred, catching sight of the two in the window, came running in great haste towards them and, from his eager manner, evidently had something of vast import to communicate.



“It’s just too jolly to keep, and I am awfully glad I spied you all out. Just think of it, a party of real English lords have just arrived here,” he proclaimed, with emphasis, “and one of them is a real menagerie, a dandy, and a fop, and tries to be so swell, with his eye-glass, and baby walking stick, and French valet, and leaves off his h’s, don’t-you-know; and won’t I have a picnic? hurrah for Johnny Bull!” he wound up, flinging his cap around his head, and crying out jubilantly, then broke into a merry laugh, in which he was joined by Rosalind and Gerald. The boy’s gay spirits acted like a charm upon the two, both of whom greatly enjoyed the droll description he had given of the titled Englishman, and when his mirth had somewhat subsided, Gerald said:

“Perhaps you are not aware of the fact that you are a perfect facsimile of Peck’s bad boy, and, if I am not overestimating your ability, fame and fortune no doubt awaits you on the American stage, in that exclusive role. I shall speak to father about the matter, and inform him that I have at last discovered your forte, having so often heard him conjecturing as to what you were best fitted for.”

Gerald maintained such a serious tone of voice throughout this speech that, for some moments, Fred appeared at a loss to decipher whether he was jesting or really in earnest. However, the boy was too sharp to be outwitted; so, setting his cap to one side of his head, and leaning upon his umbrella in the most nonchalant manner possible, he vociferated, “Will you? well, by joe!”

A few minutes afterward the trio separated for the



purpose of getting ready for dinner, and the delightful tete-a-tete between Rosalind and Gerald for this day at least was ended, for when they next met it was in company with the rest of the party at the dinner table. But within the heart of each there lingered the pleasant memory of their meeting, and long after the others slept Rosalind lay awake calling to mind and repeating over the portions of verse Gerald had recited to her, while he, incited also to a poetical mood through this interview, at the same time was sitting in his room dreamily conning over some lines from Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poems of passion, and it is easy to guess of whom he was thinking as he repeated softly:

“ ‘ When my blood flows calm as a purling river,  
When my heart is asleep and my brain has sway,  
It is then that I vow we must part forever—  
That I will forget thee and put thee away.

“ ‘ Out of my life as a dream is banished,  
Out of the mind when the dreamer awakes—  
That I know it will be when the spell has vanished  
Better for both our sakes.’ ”

“Yes, better for both our sakes!” he added, sadly, as he arose and strode up and down his room; then he looked at his watch and found the hands pointing to two o'clock.



## CHAPTER XV.

### AN EVENTFUL DAY.

THE next morning it so happened that all the party were breakfasting at the same time, with the exception of Fred, who as yet had not put in an appearance. The Judge had just remarked upon the fact of his absence, when he came in, his eyes bright and his face glowing with the exercise of his morning walk. But there was something else that had called up that mischievous twinkle in their hazel depths besides the fresh morning air, and to each one of the party it was plain to see that he was brimful of news and only waiting the opportunity of communicating it. Gerald seeing his anxiety to speak, and knowing, too, that the strict decorum of his father prevented him from doing so, said:

“Well, Fred, I presume you have become well acquainted with the English party in this time; have you been interviewing them this morning?”

“No, I have not; I don’t suppose their majesties will show up until about luncheon time; but I did have a little talk with them last night, and found Lord Waverly immense. But I don’t think any of you can guess who came this morning?” he added, interrogatively, looking around from one to the other and letting his eyes rest on Hetty.

Upon this the elder sister changed color rapidly, and in a tone of dismay asked:



“Who in the world are you speaking of, Fred? not the the Nortons, I trust?”

“What a good guesser you are, sister; yes, you are right, it’s the Nortons; they were among the new arrivals this morning. Now to see her look cheap,” the boy added to Gerald, sotto-voce.”

“I am completely dumbfounded and exceedingly annoyed, and half inclined to take the next south-bound train,” expostulated Henrietta, nervously, emphasizing each syllable and looking everything that she had expressed.

“No, no, do not think of anything so foolish; why should you care for their coming? every one here are strangers to us anyhow, so there is no use of feeling bad over it after all,” said her father, in a conciliatory tone.

“I am really not surprised that Hetty should not wish to recognize Mrs. Norton even among strangers, for in my opinion she is the most ill-bred person I have ever met who makes any pretense whatever towards society,” proclaimed Mrs. Porter, haughtily.

“Well, that is the misfortune of ignorance, for which the woman is hardly responsible; but on Norton’s account treat her civilly when you meet her. Politeness never hurts any one, and when we cease to be polite, even to our inferiors, we disregard the most essential feature of good breeding; I do not wish to encroach on your time, but if you will bear with me I would like to illustrate the truth of what I was trying to impress upon you.”

They all bowed assent, and the Judge continued:

“After General Washington had become great and re-



nowned the world over he was riding along one day in company with a comrade officer, when they were met by an old negro, who, agreeable to the custom of menials at that time, took off his hat and bowed reverently to the two. What was the surprise of the other officer, to see Washington, in answer to the old negro's greeting, take off his own hat also. Whereupon being questioned in the most astonished manner by his friend, Washington replied, 'Yes, I took off my hat to the old darkey, he having done so to me, for it shall never be said that a poor, ignorant negro could show more politeness than George Washington.'"

Then, by way of emphasizing his conclusion, Judge Underwood arose from the table, and saying that he would join them on the veranda in time for starting out on their day's excursion, quitted the diningroom.

"Chestnuts!" exclaimed Fred, making wry faces at Millie across the table as soon as the pater had fairly vanished; and Millie replied by asking:

"Isn't it a wonder that papa did not tell us the story of the little hatchet also?"

At this they all laughed and arose from the table; and while the ladies grouped together for a little chat, the gentlemen went out on the veranda to indulge in their after-breakfast cigar.

Quite a number of places had been mapped out for the day while the party were breakfasting, and while the ladies were discussing their day's outing, Hetty said:

"We can at least avoid meeting that horrid Mrs. Norton to-day by not returning to luncheon, and if we visit



the different places mentioned we will consequently not get back to the hotel until late this evening. I am not positive that I will remain here twenty-four hours longer, hence it is best that we gratify the curiosity of the younger members of our party by taking in every available place of note to-day."

So it was agreed that they would remain out all day, and a hamper of eatables was ordered to be sent out also, each seeming highly elated at the idea of devoting the remainder of the day rambling amongst the picturesque haunts pertaining to localities about the falls. All except the three debutantes and Fred had visited Niagara before, hence it was not so much the desire of Hettie and Mrs. Porter to again view the environments of the wonderful falls as it was to avoid as long as possible a meeting with the Nortons.

The ladies were not long in equipping themselves for the excursion, hence when the carriages which were to convey the party were announced they were all in readiness and hastened out, fearing that even at the very last minute they might encounter their undesired acquaintances. However, their fears upon this score proved groundless, as there was no sign of them visible; but just as they were in the act of starting, Fred, who had perched himself on the box beside the driver of the forward coupe, called their attention to the fact that "the dude Englishman was able to be out," and much to the amusement of all except Gerald they beheld the titled fop standing on the steps of the veranda, his hat tilted towards his nose and leaning, as Fred would have termed it, in a hipshot



fashion upon a miniature walking-stick, and with an air of conceited nonchalance, sweeping the party with his eyeglass. Upon observing this Gerald frowned darkly and gave orders to the advance coachman to drive on.

“A pretty piece of impertinence, I must say,” he expostulated, as he stepped into the third and last carriage drawn up in line, in which Rosalind, Millie, and Edgar Wilkerson, had already entered and were making themselves comfortable. It had so happened that Judge Underwood, after handing Mrs. Porter and Henrietta in the first carriage, with Mr. Barton had taken the front seat of the same, little dreaming, however, of the disappointment and chagrin he had so unintentionally awakened within the breast of the fair widow, who had fully expected Gerald to be her escort, on this occasion in particular. But not so; for, naturally enough, after Nellie, Nettie, and the two cadets, had ensconced themselves in the second coupe, it had fallen to the lot of Gerald and Edgar to find accommodations in the third; though this arrangement had proven most agreeable to all concerned, it had neither been premeditated or prearranged, but was altogether an accident. Lewiston mountain, seven miles distant from the falls, was the projected trip for the forenoon, and as it was then past ten, there was little enough time to reach their destination and take a view of their surroundings before the noon hour; hence they were driven as briskly as possible up the mountain, and were accordingly nearing the summit, when something occurred to detain the rear coach. At the very time they were climbing the steepest of the ascent, one of the horses became



perverse, refusing to budge a step farther, and, notwithstanding the stinging lash of the driver, the animal continued in its obstinacy, rearing and plunging, and going backward instead of forward, making the situation a rather precarious one for the occupants of the vehicle. Millie grew very much frightened, and begged pathetically that they would all get out and walk up the steepest acclivity, or at least remain out of the carriage until the horses became more docile and manageable, and to appease his sister, Gerald consented to do so. Thus it was that they were left some distance behind the forward carriages. Quite a little walk yet remained to them before they would reach the spot designated, hence they left the highway and meandered along a narrow footpath, almost losing their balance at times by the giving away of the sandy gravel beneath their feet, which would go rattling down the mountain side. However, the two girls, assisted by the gentlemen, fought their way upward until they at last reached the level. Gerald escorted Rosalind, and by some means the two couples had taken different paths, thus becoming separated. And when they had finished their fatiguing journey, and Rosalind stood before Gerald with heightened color and a bright sparkle in her pansy-blue eyes, never had she appeared more charmingly lovely to him—not even when in his surprise he had encountered her in her headlong flight from Ivy Crown; for then there had been a frightened look in her eyes, which were now so smiling and happy in expression. “How pure and spotless she appears, and how devoid of art,” he mentally soliloquized,



as he noted the perfect chiseling of the features—the soft cheeks aglow with recent exercise and maidenly blushes; the red lips slightly apart, through which the excited breath came quickly; the rich, brown hair, gleaming golden-like in the sunlight, altogether making her a picture fair to behold. And while she stood there gazing on the lovely scene afforded her from the elevated height, breathing the pure and vivifying atmosphere, and fanned by the cool breezes of the mountain, Gerald asked himself how it was possible for him to cease loving this angelic child-woman, who, as it seemed, had taken hold upon every fibre of his being, heart, soul and body. At that moment he realized the power of her beauty over him, and felt within his own heart and mind that it was useless to try longer to resist its masterful influence. Again he felt all the tenderness of his nature reawakened, and to himself he acknowledged that this girl was the one thing needful to his happiness, and, without her, life would indeed be unsatisfied and incomplete. As to Rosalind, she had experienced many heart thrills while Gerald supported her up the mountain path, and though he had appeared cold and indifferent towards her of late, she felt intuitively as he stood there, looking through her eyes into her very soul, that he did care for her very much after all; for, if ever love shone in any man's eyes, it surely was revealed in his.

They were alone, having become separated from Millie and Edgar as before described, and, though the two were not so far away but what their merry chatter could be heard, still they were not visible and their words were



not distinguishable; and Gerald felt that he would like to open his heart then and there, and tell Rosalind how dear she had become to him and how all his hopes of future happiness depended upon her, and ask her in plain words to explain to him what he had seen and heard between herself and Edgar Wilkerson in the rose arbor, upon that never-to-be-forgotten night at Ivy Crown. But stubborn pride forbade him speaking, and as a patch of clouds suddenly obscured the sunlight, just so a mysterious darkness crossed his face and rested upon his handsome brow. Rosalind, observing him closely, noted the change in his countenance, and felt hurt and saddened by it; for she divined the cause at once. Her heart taught her their relative positions towards each other, and she knew that Gerald was laboring under false impressions regarding herself and Edgar; but how was it possible for her to explain the situation or throw off the suspicion of herself and Edgar being lovers, without betraying the trust Millie had confided to her keeping? It was simply impossible! With a look of beseeching in her eyes, which were still fastened upon him, she said:

“How quickly your moods change, Mr. Underwood. Only a few moments ago you appeared pleased and happy; now your face is overshadowed with gloom. Would you mind telling me the reason of this?”

Gerald's face cleared a little as he met the anxious gaze and heard the softly pathetic tones interrogating him in such a simple child-like manner.

“I fear you would think me the most inquisitive person in the world were I to ask you a question, or rather



a number of them, which really concerns no one but yourself."

"Certainly not, I will take pleasure in answering any question or questions that concern no one but myself," she replied, frankly.

"Then, before confessing to you my own regard, I would like to know what Edgar Wilkerson is to you?" he said, his voice faltering with emotion.

"Will you take my word of honor without questioning its truth?" she asked, looking him straight in the eyes.

And while those lovely blue orbs, so full of truth and womanly tenderness, were searching his own, he felt that under the spell of her presence it would be utterly impossible to doubt anything she would tell him, so naturally enough he replied:

"Since it would be simply impossible to couple your word with that of a falsehood, I could not do otherwise than believe anything coming from your lips."

His words were low and earnest, and, to Rosalind, full of meaning.

"Thank you," she said, in grave, sweet tones, "and now let me say to you that Edgar Wilkerson is nothing to me whatever but an acquaintance whom I respect and think deserving of credit."

"Then I was mistaken in supposing that it was a love scene upon which I accidentally stumbled some weeks ago at Ivy Crown?" he said, his face flushing and paling by turns.

"No, it was not a love scene, and my being there alone with him did not in any way relate to myself; furthermore I am not at liberty to explain."



“Enough! I should have remembered that you had given me no right to thus interrogate you; but believe me when I tell you it was not idle curiosity that prompted me to ask those questions, but on the contrary, the interest and kind feeling with which I have regarded you from the first of our acquaintance; and may I say it, those feelings have strengthened and intensified until I am at a loss to know to what extent they may reach; can you limit the bounds?”

Before Rosalind could form a reply, Millie's voice, sounding but a short distance away, interrupted them; then she and Edgar appeared right in their midst.

“I came to tell you that the others are looking for us, and that Fred has been making the woods ring with his hideous war-whoops; so before answering him I thought it best for us all to get together and file up in proper style, and then, as Fred says, we will be strictly in it,” laughed Millie, gayly, all unaware of the fact that she had cut short a conversation which was unmistakably verging upon an avowal of love from Gerald, and would no doubt have ended in a full and comprehensive understanding between he and Rosalind; truly—

“Of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these: ‘It might have been.’”

But notwithstanding the fact that Gerald had not fully confessed his love to Rosalind, she felt blissfully content, for had not his eyes, those wondrous speaking orbs, and the whole expression of his face, told her plainer than any words the sentiment of his heart? And then, too,



had there come no interruption he would have surely breathed to her the old and oft-repeated story that either makes or mars the happiness of man and woman. This was definite enough, and satisfactory enough also, and a thrill of the most pleasurable emotion darted through her heart as she realized at last the true state of his feelings towards her. Hence it was with the greatest zest she joined in Millie's merry chatter while they followed the zigzag pathway which led to where the other members of the party had assembled themselves preparatory to lunching. Overhead were the golden lights and the purple sky, while beneath their feet was the gravelly pathway, yet Rosalind saw nothing but the brightness above; she was not conscious of any difficulty in walking, for her footsteps were as light as air; and to her there was a sentiment in everything. Even the chicken and tongue sandwiches, which were so temptingly spread out upon their arrival on the spot where the others were awaiting them, even these viands, that at any other time would have tasted common-place enough, seemed imbued with a new and delicious flavor; in truth there was a joy in everything, and life had become to her full and complete. Never before had the sunlight sparkled and glowed so bewitchingly, or the trees worn such lovely green, or the birds caroled forth such exquisite melody; and in all this beauty and music of nature she heard Gerald's voice speaking to her in the same low, sweet tone in which he had spoken a little while before. Her heart was attuned to all lovely sights and sounds, for under the magical touch of love it had fully awakened, and to one like our



heroine, who was especially endowed with all the finer senses which constitute heart, soul and body, what could have been higher, purer, or more ennobling than the merging of all these lofty attributes into the one grand passion called love? How often in the dark days of the not distant future did Rosalind recall this as the very happiest day her life had ever known? And when looking back through the shadowy mist and gloom that encompassed her, it seemed that after all it had not been a reality, but only a beautiful dream.

After lunching and enjoying the magnificent view of the lovely stretch of the surrounding country afforded them from the mountain, our party continued their search for amusement by visiting Brock's monument, when, after lingering a short time, they proceeded to Fort Niagara, a distance of fourteen miles from their hotel, which consequently detained them until a late hour; thus Hetty's wish had its fulfillment, as it was fully nine o'clock when they reached the Clifton House. Owing to the lateness of the hour there was no time for the ladies to dress for dinner, so with a little rearrangement of their toilettes they descended en suite to the diningroom, hoping to find it almost if not entirely vacated. But not so, for it appeared that, like themselves, most of the visitors had also come in late, while some were even later than they were. But happily for them, the table which had been assigned Judge Underwood for the exclusive use of his party was quite near the entrance, hence their coming in served to attract but little attention. Yet this was not all, for they had scarcely become seated before Fred called out in a stage whisper:



“Great Jerusalem; just look at the masher!” at the same time indicating with a nod of his head the direction where the Nortons were seated, and though they were removed a safe distance, they were not so far but that the conspicuous dress of the lady, in every detail, could be plainly observed; and, notwithstanding the fact that Fred’s so-termed rudeness elicited a reprimand from his father, he was more than rewarded for his pains by seeing the glances of disgust exchanged between his sister Hettie and Mrs. Porter. It was no wonder, for never had the exceeding bad taste of “their neighbor’s wife” been more effectually displayed than on this occasion. The flashy red satin which she wore would have been unbecoming enough to her sallow, washed-out complexion, had it been modeled after a neat and elegant style, but cut as it was—decollete—with sleeves scarcely reaching the elbow, thus showing off to the greatest possible disadvantage the skinny arms and unshapely hands, she appeared simply ridiculous; while emerging from the billows of creamy lace, puffed and frilled about the low bodice, the thin neck and face appeared even more insignificant and diminutive than ever. To complete her showy toilette, the pale blonde hair had been crimped and curled to its very roots, and upon each sallow cheek glowed a vivid spot of carmine. Altogether, she appeared more like a burlesque performer ready to step before the footlights in comic opera, than as a representative of the fairest land upon which the sun ever shone—the blue-grass region of Kentucky. And while the Underwoods, who were truly the high-born and blooded people of that



locality, witnessed the spectacle this brainless woman was making of herself, they felt ready to sink through the floor with shame and mortification, their native pride having indeed received a severe shock. Rosalind felt moved to pity for the woman; for, while listening to her senseless conversation on the several former occasions of their meetings, she had learned that Mrs. Norton's advantages of education had been extremely limited, and that she could lay no claim whatever to culture; hence this generous girl thought her more to be pitied than blamed, for what else could be expected of the conceited creature, with whom ignorance was paramount. During this time the innocent cause of all this perturbation was nevertheless enjoying herself while she sat there noting the many glances of, what she deemed, admiration cast towards her, and feeling confident of the fact that she was the most admired woman in the diningroom. This idea argued greatly to her complacency of manner towards her husband. But though she beamed upon him her most pleasing smiles, poor Norton felt ill at ease and his face had grown as red as a lobster. He had realized the fact that his wife's gaudy apparel was attracting much attention, and that she was making him, as well as herself, a laughing stock, and, though he was not usually very quick of comprehension, in this case he was forced to draw the line of discrimination, and mark the difference between loudness and true gentility of dress and manner. Never had he felt a deeper regret for his unwise choice than at that moment. About this time, however, he caught a glimpse of the Underwood party, and seeing the modest



and unpretentious appearance the ladies were making in their eton suits, his discomfiture knew no bounds.

“I told you not to wear that dress,” he whispered, hoarsely. “And beside these other ladies you look like a regular scarecrow; why won’t you exercise a little common sense once in a while and not make a blamed fool of yourself?” he interrogated, purple with rage.

“Oh, you are only jealous because the gentlemen are all looking at me, that’s all,” she returned, raising her voice a key higher and giving him a scornful glance. “I must not allow the old foggy to make me mad, for it makes such an ugly mark across my forehead when my temper gets up, and I won’t do him the favor of getting riled,” were her mental cogitations and conclusions, while she listened to his fault-finding, at the same time letting her eyes rove over the room in search of new conquests, feeling more flattered than ever on finding the eyes of the dude Englishman fixed upon her, who, having met her free glance, adjusted his eyeglass and sat back in his chair to take a more critical survey. “Mauvais gout,” he said, sotto voce, turning to his companion, after having studied her face and general make-up for a few moments.

“Another mash; and ain’t he a stunner?” was her mental query, as she observed the impertinent stare with which the new arrival was regarding her.

Ever since this unfortunate couple had entered the diningroom, they had excited curiosity and amusement; in truth, several young girls, inclined to be somewhat giddy, sitting directly opposite them, were compelled to



place their napkins over their mouths many times during the meal for the purpose of stifling their mirth. Norton had not mentioned having seen the Underwoods enter, for he felt, intuitively, that they would not care to recognize his wife, making the disgusting appearance that she, without a doubt, was making on that evening in particular. The ladies of the Underwood party did not linger as they usually did over the dinner table; instead, however, they partook sparingly of the various courses, which were removed successively almost untasted, and, after having gone through a semblance of dining, they left the table as quietly as they had entered, and hastened to their own apartments. Just as they were passing out of the room Mrs. Norton discovered them, and, turning to her husband, asked, "Why didn't you tell me the Underwoods were in the diningroom?"

"I might have told you if you had worn a more decent dress," was the husband's sharp retort; "but I see the Judge is still at the table, and if you will come along now we will get to speak to him," he added, in a more conciliatory tone, at the same time rising and leading the way in the direction of Judge Underwood's table. While speaking to his wife a few moments before, he had suddenly met the eyes of this gentleman looking kindly and pityingly towards him, hence the change in his demeanor towards her. Upon reaching the table where sat their well-bred neighbor, both the father and Gerald rose and gave them a hearty handshake—so characteristic of the true Kentuckian—which had the effect of placing the great awkward fellow at a comparative ease of manner.



In answer to Mrs. Norton's inquiry concerning the ladies, Judge Underwood replied, "They are all very well, thank you, but having been out all day are very much fatigued, and have retired to their rooms to make themselves comfortable." Then in his suave, polite way, he asked if she would join them, while her husband went out with him for a smoke.

But thinking the parlors far better suited to her elaborate toilette, the lady refused by saying, affectedly, "I shall be glad to have Tom go and smoke with you, but I won't go up to see your folks to-night, but will wait for him in the parlor."

Henry and Edwin chanced to hear this remark, and hastened to the parlor with a view of having "lots of fun;" and it so happened, while the Judge and Norton smoked their cigars on the veranda, these young men entertained the foolish woman in the parlor by talking the veriest nonsense and pouring into her willing ears the most extravagant flattery. In the meantime Hetty, Mrs. Porter and Nellie were congregated in the room of the former deploring the possibility, or rather the probability, of meeting the outlandish creature, as Henrietta termed the new arrival from their highly favored locality, and while the three were thus engaged, Millie and Nettie played dominos and Rosalind wrote a letter home to her Aunt Vilinda.

It was wonderful to see the enlivening effect Judge Underwood's conversation produced upon Norton, but no one knew as well as he how to handle the subject which mostly interested him, and that subject was nothing more



nor less than horse, for when necessary Judge Underwood could talk horse as entertainingly as the most veritable jockey. And while these two men, who by birth were of the same social degree, but whom association had rendered so dissimilar, discussed this theme, Fred listened attentively, thereby drawing many conclusions.

During this time Mrs. Norton, feeling convinced that her belleship was fast asserting itself, sat by the parlor window overlooking the veranda, and while she played the agreeable to the two cadets, was not surprised to see the Englishman, who had attracted her attention at dinner, saunter leisurely by, adjust his eye-glass, and give her, what a more modest woman would have deemed, a most impudent stare. But as the woman in question was not troubled with delicate sensibilities, nor in this case does the flower of courtesy bear handling, for as defect in manners is usually the defect of fine perceptions, Mrs. Norton was spared the knowledge of there being anything improper in such conduct on the part of the Englishman, she having yet to learn that a gentleman makes no noise while a lady is serene; and notwithstanding her diamonds had cost Norton a cool five thousand and her showy dress was composed of the most expensive materials, all of these possessions were not one-fourth equal in value to the fine qualities of good breeding.

“A fine bird, by Joe, if the saying that ‘fine feathers make fine birds’ be true, but if I am not mistaken she has the look and manners of a parvenue. I wonder if the diamonds she wears are weal; if they are, by Joe, they are worth a few thousand, and it must be that they are



weal, for I see her husband in company with that swell old Judge from Kentucky, and after all the game may be worth the candle. Arry, old boy, it may be that at last you have struck luck, by Joe!"

Thus soliloquized the wily English lord while he promenaded the veranda of the Clifton House, and, agreeable to his matter-of-fact way of terming it, sized up the situation. Then observing Fred, and recognizing him as one of the Kentucky party, he immediately decided to cultivate the lad's acquaintance, and as soon as an opportunity offered itself ask him all about the woman whose diamonds had so interested him. Suiting the action to the thought, he stepped up to the boy, and in his pompous manner said, in the blindest of English tones:

"Ow are you, my lad? I am weally glad to find you alone, as I have been trying all day to get better acquainted with you."

The attitude, as well as the conceited manner of the Englishman, was most amusing to Fred, but seeing an opportunity for a good time, and that his anticipated picnic with the English swell was a sure thing, he overcame his desire to laugh, and affecting as serious manner as possible, gracefully raised his cap, and in wonderful mimicry of his father offered his hand:

"Thank you, sir, for the honor; my name is Fred Underwood, and I live in Kentucky."

"And I am Lord Arry Waverly, of England, but you and I, Master Fred, must not use any ceremony, therefore with you, my dear boy, it must be simply Arry, and I will call you Freddy; isn't that proper, my dear boy?"



“Oh, yes, perfectly proper, I should think, at least as far as you calling me by my name is concerned, but I could never think of calling you, a real living lord, by your Christian name.”

“But I am so much like a boy myself that I long for the companionship of boys, and my heart warms towards a lad like yourself, don’t-you-know, and I sincerely hope we may be such good friends that you will forget the fact that I am a lord and call me Arry, simply Arry, my dear boy!”

“Simple Arry,” echoed Fred, under his breath. “That would be about the most suitable name I could call you.” Then he said, aloud:

“Why, of course, we will be good friends. I am from Kentucky, don’t-you-know, and I suppose you have heard what jolly, friendly people, Kentuckians are?”

“Yes, indeed! fine country, fine orses, fine whiskey, and pretty women—excellent, my dear boy, excellent, don’t-you-know.”

It was as much as Fred could do to keep from howling with laughter while listening to the gushing harangue of his new acquaintance, but he managed to control his risibles by the greatest effort, maintaining, too, a look of mimic solemnity and very much impressing the Englishman with his mature manner and extraordinary intelligence. After a short silence, Lord Harry recommenced the conversation by saying:

“So you are visiting Niagara for the first time, I dare say, my dear boy, and I want you to tell me what you think of this great combined wonder of England and America.”



“Oh, I think it the grandest thing in nature, even grander than the Mammoth Cave, Kentucky’s wonder; have you ever visited it, Lord Harry?”

“No, my dear boy, not yet, but we will perhaps do so while we are on this tour. But you should go abroad, my dear boy, and see what grandeur and glory the old country holds—England for an example, with its beautiful landed estates, don’t-you-know, and lovely old manor houses, and clipped yew trees, and flower gardens, and peacocks that strut about from sunrise until sunset. Oh! I can not half describe to you, my dear boy, the beauties of dear old England, but leave it to your youthful imagination; just close your eyes and believe yourself in paradise, and you will have a vision of what I have tried to tell you about.”

“I wonder where the rooster thinks I have been all my life?” thought Fred, contemptuously, “giving me such as that. But I must not get my Kentucky spunk up, for if I do all my fun will be knocked out; so it only remains for me to be civil.” Aloud, he said:

“I suppose it must be all pretty fine, Lord Harry, but if you travel through Kentucky while on your tour, you will see some nice old country houses, where there are flowers, trees, and peacocks in abundance.”

“Yes, yes, my dear boy! no doubt it is quite nice there, but then it is all so new, don’t-you-know! and it will take many years to give those places the look of the dwellings of aristocracy. It will never be anything like England; never while any of the present generation exist.”

“I only wish the conceited donkey could see Ivy



Crown," mused Fred, "but I wouldn't dare to ask him there, for he is the very kind of a man Gerry would freeze out in a jiffy."

During this silence Lord Harry had taken a few long strides nearer the window where Mrs. Norton sat, and, having given her another survey, returned to Fred and continued the subject by asking:

"Are you aware, my dear boy, that you are at this moment standing on English soil, while right over there is your own country, don't-you-know?"

"Yes, I believe my geography informed me of the fact that Canada belongs to England; but say, Lord Harry, don't you think it was a pretty shabby thing in the English to drive the French people from here, after they had made themselves such nice homes and gotten so well fixed?"

"That was a long time ago, my dear boy; however, England was the rightful owner of the country, though the French claimed it, don't-you-know. But, Freddie, my dear boy, you remember that we were becoming good friends; therefore we must not find cause to differ in opinion, don't-you-know. You are a Kentuckian, and I am an English—"

"Lord," interposed Fred. "I shall certainly not forget the honor, sir," he added, touching his hat.

"Well, you are a good one, by Joe," replied the swell, appearing much pleased over Fred's flattery; "but I was not going to remind you of that fact, my dear boy, but only going to say that I was an Englishman, that was all, I can assure you, my dear boy."



As the conversation between Lord Harry and Fred progressed, the bright lad grew more amused and disgusted every moment. The idea of a coxcomb like him representing the nobility of any nation seemed absurd to the boy, for it had never occurred to him that a lord could be anything but noble in appearance and lofty-minded. One can imagine his disappointment, when brought face to face with this *petit-maitre*, and it was evident that henceforward his opinion of the blue blood of England would be considerably dwarfed. And while Fred was making a diagnosis of the Englishman's character, on the other hand, the titled gentleman was considering whether or not it would be good policy to ask Master Fred something about the owner of the handsome diamonds. But, as luck would have it, Fred did not wait to be interrogated. Having seen the direction in which Lord Harry's eyes had so frequently wandered while engaging him in conversation, the quick-witted little fellow had, proverbially speaking, smelled a rat; and, while not being exactly able to define the attraction Mrs. Norton had for the lord, he realized the fact that his anticipated fun would surely have its fulfillment by throwing the two together, hence his course of action was decided upon at once.

"I say, Lord Harry, how would you like to get acquainted with a Kentucky lady?" he asked, lowering his voice and speaking in the most confidential tone.

"Well, weally, my dear boy, if she is anything like you, I should like it very much! very much, indeed! my dear boy."

"Well, as she is no relation of mine, and only happens



to live in our neighborhood, I cannot say that she in any way resembles any of my family, but her husband's farm joins papa's, and he is as rich as Cræsus, owns one of the finest stock farms in our county, and has lots of money besides, and papa says he came of one of the best families of Kentucky; but he is a regular old foggy, and has nothing to say unless papa will talk horse to him, then he's in his glory. But come along, Lord Harry, and get acquainted with his wife; she can talk enough for you and two or three more, and is the kind of a woman to give a fellow a good time, so the young men of our party say, and if you want to get in jolly company I will take you to the parlor and give you the knocking down."

"The what?" inquired Lord Harry, stepping back, with a look of alarm.

"Oh, don't be scared; I only meant I would introduce you to her, and that was just my slang way of putting it," explained Fred, ready to explode with laughter as he led the way to the parlor.

Little did the boy think how by this act of gratifying his innocent love of amusement he was playing into the hands of a broken-down English peer, whose notoriety as a gambler and debauchee was widespread throughout England, and whose debts far exceeded his income, and who, notwithstanding his title, was nothing more nor less than an adventurer, with no conscientious scruples in regard to the accomplishment of his own selfish purposes. No, indeed! Fred, tho' bright and full of fun, was far too innocent minded to conceive of the rascally scheming of the man whom he was escorting to the side of Tom Norton's vain and foolish wife.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### MRS. PORTER'S RUSE.

THE Underwood party (meaning the ladies) did not go down on the following morning until a late hour; not until Fred had brought them the news that the Nortons had left the diningroom could they be induced to enter it, Hetty being as intent as ever upon the idea of avoiding the disgusting woman as long as possible; it mattered not if everybody were strangers, still her native pride recoiled from acknowledging her even in their presence, and the only sure method of not having to do so was to keep out of her way.

All the party had very much enjoyed their visit to the falls, and up to the time of the arrival of the Nortons nothing had occurred to mar their felicity. Never had a hotel offered so many homelike comforts as had the Clifton House, and never had such inviting scenes presented themselves to view as on every side their eyes rested. The atmosphere, too, was pure and bracing, and each felt its invigorating effect. Under the judicious management of its present proprietor everything had undergone a wonderful improvement since Judge Underwood had previously accompanied his family hither, hence he was more enthusiastic in his expressions of admiration over everything than the others. The rare and beautiful specimens of flowers that grew in Victoria Park greatly inter-



ested him and called into action his botanical knowledge, also Rosalind's assistance in analyzing them.

This proved a very pleasant task to the girl; nature's beauties were her greatest delight, and in the majestic grandeur of the falls and the combined loveliness of art and nature which environed them, she felt that she would love to gaze upon such scenes and listen to the mighty roar of glorious Niagara forever. What sweet language did its voice speak to her? What exultant, soul-inspiring songs did it sing to her while she sat under the spell of its magical sound, which awoke from the fathomless depths of her being an answering rhythm? And now the possibility of so soon leaving this magnificent piece of nature's handiwork filled her heart with sadness, this having been the topic of the party over their late breakfast, they having all about decided upon taking their leave on the following day.

Gerald had not had an opportunity of speaking to Rosalind alone since their excursion to Lewiston mountain, and tho' that was only the day previous, it appeared ages to Rosalind. Just as they were leaving the table on the morning in question, however, they encountered him at the entrance door; bowing and smiling friendlily, he said:

"Come, Miss Morton, since it is understood that we will leave here to-morrow, I will take yourself and Millie for a last trip around the falls; would you enjoy going?"

"Yes, indeed, we will be delighted," cried Millie, before Rosalind could answer.

"Thank you for your thoughtful kindness; I shall enjoy



it very much, I am sure," Rosalind replied to Gerald's look of interrogation.

"You dear old Gerry, I begin to think that you are the only trump in the game of chance that ever turns up at the right time," expostulated Millie, running up to the big brother and patting his cheek caressingly. Then the two girls hastened up stairs to get their hats and light wraps preparatory to going, Gerald also sauntered out on the veranda to await them. Nellie and Nettie were in the parlor with the two cadets, the four having left the diningroom prior to the rest of the company. Judge Underwood and Fred had gone out for a walk, hence Hetty and Mrs. Porter found themselves quite alone.

"What a coquette that girl is!" exclaimed Mrs. Porter, as soon as they had vanished from sight, and her tone was a trifle less serene than usual.

Hetty did not reply, but, agreeable to her old habit, arched her eyebrows and looked inquisitive; then the two went slowly up the steps to Hetty's room.

"You do not seem the least curious to know why I expressed myself as I did just now," the widow continued, sinking into a chair and putting on an aggrieved look.

"Excuse me, Laura; I was only waiting for you to explain of whom you were speaking," Hetty replied, rather dryly.

"Why, Rosalind Morton, of course; you surely did not suppose I was speaking of Millie?"

"In that case I think you do Rosalind an injustice. I do not see how you make the term applicable to her; to



me she has always appeared very retiring in her manners. How is it that she impressed you so differently?"

"That is just where she has deceived you, my dear Hetty. That manner of hers is merely assumed; in fact, everything she does and says is with a view of attracting and bringing herself into notice. Believe me, she charms like a cat, and unless one has found her out, it would be impossible to suspect her of being capable of so much artfulness."

"It really seems that you have become prejudiced; what has she done to have caused it? For my part, I have thought her quite a model of propriety, and was glad that Millie had formed such an attachment for her; but if she has proven herself unworthy of our patronage it is best that I should know it," Hetty said, with some impatience, and Mrs. Porter understood from her tone that she wished her to explain at once upon what authority she had spoken.

"No, I'm not in the least prejudiced, but a little incident that occurred at Ivy Crown a short time before we left there, which your brother Gerald and myself chanced to witness, caused me to watch the girl more closely, and I find it very amusing to see how adroitly she draws both your brother and Edgar Wilkerson on, keeping them both in suspense, but at the same time making each believe that he is the favored one."

"Still you speak in enigmas, Laura; do be more explicit," said Hetty, irritably.

"Well, the truth is, Edgar Wilkerson and Rosalind are lovers, and while at Ivy Crown they fulfilled their ap-



pointments by meeting secretly in those sequestered haunts, so well adapted to love-making and sentimentalizing. One night when the two had chosen the little rose bower at the extreme part of the grounds, your brother Gerald and I accidentally chanced upon them, and just as accidentally heard what was passing between them. It seemed that he was trying to impress upon her the impropriety of meeting him clandestinely, for we distinctly heard him say that he feared she would be compromised, and she had the boldness to answer that she was not afraid of being compromised; then he assured her that all things were fair in love and war. Remember that we were not eavesdropping, but it so happened that my skirt had been caught by a rose bush, and while Gerald was disengaging it these words fell upon our ears. However, they were too intent with their theme to be aware of our presence, for he was holding her hand and looking as lover-like as Romeo is supposed to have looked at Juliet."

At this unexpected news Hetty was dumb with astonishment; from her lofty height she had viewed Rosalind with condescending approval, feeling perfectly satisfied that she was a suitable companion for Millie, hence she was totally unprepared for this revelation and could find no words with which to express her consternation. Then, too, she regarded Rosalind as a mere child, never dreaming that she had any ideas of clandestine meetings with young men, or of anything that savored of intrigue. What was she to think upon hearing such a report, coming, too, from a woman whose assertion she would never think of



doubting, or either censure her with a motive in telling such things.

“I really felt a delicacy in speaking to you about this, and had we not been the good friends that we are I should not have done so. But under the circumstances I felt it my duty to enlighten you, for knowing the girl to be capable of such imprudence, I feared for the influence she might wield over Millie. However, I trust you will not mention what I have told you until the matter furthermore develops itself. In the meanwhile it will be very easy to separate the two girls when we return to Ivy Crown, whereas should you undertake to do so now, explanations would necessarily follow, bringing about an unpleasantness to all concerned.”

“You are quite right, Laura, and I will take your advice, tho’ I feel enough put out about the affair to bring things to an immediate terminus by having this premature adventuress returned at once to the care of the doting old aunt, who has not the slightest idea what an ungrateful creature she is fostering. But I will desist and for the present keep quiet upon the subject, trusting that you will assist me in getting together such proof as you may regarding her conduct while under my father’s charge. With your evidence to this effect, I would feel no hesitancy in laying the whole matter before either he or Gerald, neither of whom would have consented to the girl making one of our party had they been aware of her improper conduct, nor would they hesitate a moment to inform Miss Vilinda Morton of the dubious course her grand-niece is pursuing.”



“As far as your father is concerned, he would not fail to discharge his duty, no matter how stern, but as to Gerald, did I not just tell you that he was eye witness to the scene I just described to you? But, the truth is, he, as well as young Wilkerson, is in love with the girl; and, the old adage that love is blind, verifies itself in this, as well as many other cases.”

“I must say, you give Gerald credit for a very limited amount of common sense, by thinking for a moment that he is foolish enough to have fallen in love with such a chit of a girl as Rosalind Morton. How could such be possible, after having mingled with the most beautiful and high-born ladies of all countries? Please tell me upon what grounds your suspicions in this case are based,” replied Hetty, waxing warm.

“Why, my dear Hetty, when one has amused one's self for years by making a study of people whom they meet daily, there are always little things occurring to attract and interest; hence it was an easy matter for me to see the change that came over the face of your brother, Gerald, when he and I so unexpectedly came upon that girl and Edgar Wilkerson in the summer house. I really thought he was going to faint, and he seemed to be entirely forgetful of the fact that I was in company with him, for I could hardly keep in reach of his arm as he hurried me off to the house.”

“That was because he was so shocked and surprised. His sensibilities are very fine, and he was no doubt badly hurt to see such imprudence in a girl so young, and, apparently, so innocent. But you do him a great injustice



by supposing him susceptible to such school-girl attractions as she possesses. Since the beauty and wit of highly-cultured ladies have failed to dazzle him, there is no danger of an insignificant child like her turning his head; besides, he is one of the most critical of connoisseurs."

"Possibly I'm mistaken, but I have yet to be convinced that I am; however, since you desire it, I will assist you in any way that I can out of your dilemma, and should I make any new discovery I will let you know at once."

"Thank you, Laura, one cannot be too careful in the selection of associates for such an affectionate, impulsive child as Millie."

Hetty's face wore an anxious look, and it was but too evident that Mrs. Porter had planted the seeds of suspicion and distrust in her breast for Rosalind. In the meantime while this conversation was going on, Millie, Rosalind, Gerald, and Edgar, who had joined the three just as they were leaving the hotel, were enjoying a most delightful trip around the falls, taking a farewell look of beautiful Niagara, but it had so happened that during the whole time the little party were aboard of the small steamer no opportunity had presented itself for the two couples to enjoy a private *tete-a-tete*, still they had each experienced the happiness of being near the object of their affection; Rosalind, full of healthful vigor and elasticity of spirits, was none the less content, little dreaming of the intricate web the pretty widow was weaving about her, for as yet no shadow of coming evil had fallen athwart her flower-strewn pathway, no cloud darkened the vista of brightness that stretched out before her lofty



imagination, and her cup of blissfulness seemed full to overflowing. Gerald loved her! What greater boon could she ask or expect?

It was after one o'clock when they left the boat, and as they walked towards the hotel Fred joined them, amusing them all greatly by criticising the Englishman.

"I should never have taken him for a lord, for he is more like the kind of fellows who follow the races and prize fights and have no other business," explained the boy, thus analyzing the sporting propensities of his new acquaintance.

Had Gerald been in one of his graver moods he would doubtless have reproved his brother for his rather crude manner of expressing himself, but in his present state of content he only smiled at the astuteness the lad had manifested in reading character. No far-reaching possibilities of what the future might bring forth shadowed the bright present, and it did not seem possible that behind the bright horizon of his hopes there lay darkness and desolation. While they sat at luncheon, Mrs. Porter, watching him from under her long lashes, jealously noted his serene countenance, but consoled herself with the thought that she had placed Rosalind in the questionable position that her words to Henrietta had without a doubt done. Hence she determined to feel easy over the matter, and succeeded in making herself agreeable to all the gentlemen present, as only a beautiful woman can manage to do on all occasions. Toward the ladies, too, she was more than usually amicable, not failing to take note at the same time that Hetty was keenly observant of every



word and look exchanged between Rosalind and Gerald. And while she watched Hetty, she also observed the two in question, realizing more clearly than ever that there was something more than ordinary friendship on the part of both. True they said but little to each other, and nothing that betrayed their affection; but, in this case, the poet who says, "Love's words are weak, but not love's silences," the situation is best defined. And Henrietta, too, could easily detect a gentleness and tenderness of manner in Gerald's bearing towards Rosalind, the existence of which had never before occurred to her. At this knowledge the sister was forced to admit that Mrs. Porter had judged rightly after all. Having become so absorbed in ruminating over this fact, Hetty forgot that the Hon. Percy Barton sat beside her, nor was she aware that he had addressed several remarks to her without receiving an answer, and had become greatly confused at this apparent indifference on her part. In fact, all present felt the chilliness of her demeanor, more especially Rosalind, with her quick intuition, who had also addressed to her some words without receiving any reply. Hence, in spite of Mrs. Porter's gay manner, the luncheon proved a most tiresome meal, and all the party experienced a great relief when it was over. Later on the same day, Mrs. Porter stood at the parlor window watching the return of some excursionists, among whom were the Nortons and the English party; happening to glance downward, her eyes fell upon a crumpled envelope lying upon the floor of the veranda, just outside the window and within reach of her hand. A portion of the address was visible



and she at once recognized Millie's handwriting. It was only the work of a moment to possess herself with the letter, the next she had hastily quitted the parlor and sought her own room. As she proceeded hither her grasp tightened upon the missive, as if she had discovered that it contained something of great value, and on reaching her room she entered and carefully locked the door, then proceeded to examine the contents of the little epistle. It was addressed to Edgar Wilkerson, in Millie's pretty, girlish chirography, and ran thus:

“Dearest Edgar—Since no one has the least suspicion that we are sweethearts, I think it will be perfectly safe for me to meet you in Victoria Park to-night at ten o'clock. You know, Edgar, I haven't had a chance to speak with you alone for two days, and that is why I write and propose this meeting. Remember that I will wait for you in Victoria's bower, if I get there first, and in case that you arrive first on the scene, you can do likewise. Don't forget, ten o'clock, sharp; and whatever you do don't disappoint your loving little girl, Millie.”

For some moments after having read the note, Mrs. Porter sat in deep thought; then she rose up suddenly and went over to where her trunk—a large Saratoga—stood open. After searching about for a little while, she brought out an exquisite letter-box. Taking from it one package after another of letters, notes, and cards of invitation, she examined each and all until her diligence seemed at last rewarded, for she drew a sigh of relief as she selected an envelope of a delicate pink color from a package and replaced the rest in the beautiful little cas-



ket, which bore her monogram wrought in turquoise and pearl. Then she unfolded and read the missive which she had been so intent upon finding.

“Dear Mrs. Porter.” So it ran, “Aunt Vilinda requests that you make one of the party from Ivy Crown who have promised to dine with us to-morrow, and I, too, will be most happy to welcome you to Morton Place. Yours very truly, Rosalind Morton.”

The above was dated June 20th, and Mrs. Porter remembered that it had rained all the day mentioned, hence none of the party had gone over to dine with Miss Vilinda Morton.

Again and again did the widow read the delicately tinted note, studying every graceful curve and finish of the beautifully formed letter, and when she had finished this task seated herself at a small table, containing pen, ink, and paper, and commenced reproducing Millie’s letter in Rosalind’s handwriting. So intent she became in her anxiety to perfect her work that it is doubtful if any remorse of conscience entered her heart; if so, she turned a deaf ear to the still, small voice, and justified herself by thinking that it was her right—either by fair or foul means—to remove every obstacle that stood between herself and Gerald Underwood. She had always had a talent for imitating handwriting, but previous to this had never made use of it in this way; however, quoting Edgar Wilkerson’s version of the matter, she mentally emphasized, “All things are fair in love and war.” But in this instance it was not love, but war, that prompted her to act.



“And now, Rosalind Morton,” she continued, “beauty, saint, divinity, and everything else the adoring Gerald has seen fit to deem you, between we two it is war to the knife.”

This was her mental conclusion upon folding the letter and inclosing it in an envelope. It had taken some time for the willful woman to complete her task in a satisfactory manner, and it was not without experiencing many doubts and misgivings before she fairly realized that the words Millie had penned, which she had transferred to another sheet of note paper, were a perfect facsimile of Rosalind's chirography. Then, to make the fraud complete, the billetdoux was addressed to Edgar Wilkerson and crumpled in the same manner as the original one.

Without contemplating for a moment upon what she had done, she hastened to Hetty's room to give the letter into her hands and inform her where she had picked it up; the result of which did not fall short of the woman's expectations, as for once in her life Henrietta Underwood so far forgot her dignity as to give way entirely to her anger.

“It is positively the most shameful affair I have ever been connected with, and I feel shocked and humiliated beyond measure that I have allowed myself and party to be thus imposed upon by a perfect nobody, who tries to impress people with her goodness and innocence. I must admit, Laura, that you were not far wrong in believing that Gerald, too, had become infatuated with the girl, having myself noted his marked attentions and manifestations



of interest towards her while at luncheon to-day," said Hetty, warmly, little dreaming that it was not Rosalind, but the woman who stood before her, whose honor she supposed unquestionable, that was deceiving her, and had that day, for the sake of carrying out her own selfish purposes, committed a criminal act, not alone in forging Rosalind's name, but in heaping calumny upon the head of the innocent, high-souled girl. What greater crime than this could ever be perpetrated? And yet not a day passes but that some pure-minded, innocent woman is sacrificed in the same manner. Hence, while Hetty lamented over the misfortune of having allowed this intimacy to spring up between Millie and the young adventuress, as she now termed Rosalind, the true offender expressed much sympathetic interest in the matter.

If Henrietta had experienced the least doubt in regard to the story Mrs. Porter had told her, the note that she still held in her hand was sufficient proof of the truthfulness of her assertions. But viewing the woman from the high standard she was wont to regard those of her own class, it was not possible that any doubts should have confronted her.

After all, how little do people really know of each other? Tho' they be associated for weeks, months, and even years, they have not the power of penetrating the intricate workings of the human heart. It is true that Mrs. Porter had never been guilty of such an act before, but then it was not because of any fixed principles of honor, but simply that she had never been tempted. She had always been vain and willful, and had never submit-



ted to having her wishes thwarted; therefore, when she realized that nothing but Rosalind Morton stood in the way, as she supposed, of reigniting the old flame within the breast of Gerald, she determined to remove this obstacle at all hazards.

“What right had this girl, the daughter of an impoverished minister, to come between herself and the man who had formerly adored her?” she asked herself time and again, upon seeing that the shattered hopes of his youth had been gathered together and piece by piece builded into a temple of sublime workmanship, and the image enshrined upon that sacred altar was that of Rosalind Morton.

Not precisely in these words and sentiments did the widow sum up the situation, but the idea she still retained of Gerald's romantic, dreamy nature led her to suppose that it was the purity and innocence of Rosalind, rather than her beauty, that attracted him to her. Such were her cogitations at that moment.

“I will not wait longer, but as soon as Gerald comes in this evening I will show him this and try to convince him of the very unworthiness of the damsel, whom it seems has taken such a hold upon his imagination,” concluded Hetty in reply to Mrs. Porter's look of inquiry.

“Would it not appear a little better to return the letter to Edgar Wilkerson, who is no doubt searching for it at this very time?” asked the widow in a depreciatory tone.

“Under any other circumstances it certainly would be our duty to return it to its owner, but under the existing ones I see no reason why it should be returned; besides,



it is the only proof we have in our possession with which to convince Gerald of the girl's disgraceful conduct," replied Hetty, readily.

Mrs. Porter felt greatly relieved to hear Hetty express herself in that way, having not been fully satisfied before that her ruse would work successfully, but it seemed that even fate itself had played into her hands, and the only thing that remained to be done was to see Millie and whisper a little warning in her ear; then her safety would indeed be assured. But notwithstanding everything the woman had done on that day to cast doubts and suspicions upon the character of Rosalind, she did not forget the fashionable conventionalism that ruled her life, for to dress for dinner was an item of far greater value in her eyes than the reputation of all the fair Rosalinds in the world. So as quickly as she could get away from Henrietta, she hastened to her own room and placed herself in the hands of her very efficient maid. Her toilette upon that evening was more than ever exquisite, and two hours later, when she descended the steps, she appeared decidedly charming. Her dress was composed of some dead black material of the softest texture, and of the most tasteful make and perfect fit, comprising the art of modeling after a beautiful form; a network of cobweb lace relieved the neck and shoulders from bareness, and at the same time disclosed their plumpness and marble-like whiteness. The elbow sleeves, too, were made with a view of exposing the exquisite molding of her arms and pretty white hands to the very best advantage. She wore no jewelry, except the elegant diamond which had sealed the en-



gagement between herself and Senator Porter, and the plain gold band that told she had been a wife. No other ornament adorned the handsome woman but a bunch of pure white roses which nestled amid the cascades of lace upon her voluptuous bosom, yet nothing could have appeared more complete. Altogether, Mrs. Porter was a woman who never failed to excite admiration wherever she went, and beside her more mature charms, those of younger girls were wont to pale into insignificance. Of this the widow was perfectly aware, and until she met Rosalind she had never experienced a fear of rivalry from this source. But then she was not so sure of herself, for the ethereal beauty which so much bespoke virginal purity, and lent such a charm to this girl, was most attractive to every one, and had excited envy and deep-rooted jealousy within the breast of the woman until it had actually grown into intense hatred.

Upon the evening in question, just as she reached the foot of the stairs, the gentle frou-frou of trailing skirts fell upon her ear, and looking back she encountered Rosalind. She, too, had dressed for dinner, and the pretty costume, composed of white chiffon over lemon colored silk, was charmingly becoming to her fair complexion and slight but symmetrical form. A bunch of dark blue velvety pansies were fastened in the bodice of her dress, which vied in color with her eyes. Never had the fair girl appeared more enchantingly lovely.

In return to Rosalind's pleasant greeting, Mrs. Porter bowed coldly, and in a restrained voice asked:

"Can you tell me where I would be most apt to find Millie?"



"I left her in our room a few minutes ago; she will be down directly, I am sure."

Rosalind had hardly ceased speaking before Millie and Nettie were heard chattering at the head of the steps, then the two came bounding down.

"Oh, there you are, Rosa—my pretty Rosa, as Polly says,"—cried the merry girl as soon as she caught sight of Rosalind. "Shall we go to Victoria Park now, dear, or wait a while?" she added, not yet having seen Mrs. Porter. Then observing her, she continued, "And you here also, and looking as magnificent as ever? I wish you would impart to me the secret of always contriving to look beautiful."

But before Mrs. Porter could reply to this Rosalind said, "We will not go into the park just now, Millie, Mrs. Porter wishes to see you; Nettie and I will wait in the parlor."

As soon as the two girls had passed out of hearing the pretty widow turned to Millie and said, "Thank you, Miss Midget, for your nice compliment, and let me return it by assuring you that you need no secret of art to improve your beauty, nature having done everything necessary in that line; but I must say I think you very much inclined to flattery."

"I am sorry to know you have such a poor opinion of me as to think that when I say nice things about you I mean to flatter you; indeed I do not, but mean every word I say, and I really fear Mrs. Norton's chances for mashing this evening are pretty slim; just to think, Fred says that dude of an English lord is stuck on her," laughed Millie, provokingly.



“Well, if that is who you are comparing me with, I will take back everything I have said about you being a flatterer, and call it downright slander,” retorted Mrs. Porter, assuming an injured tone.

“I beg a thousand pardons, and promise not to be so rude again; but Rosalind said you wished to see me.”

“Yes, but in the first place I will grant you your thousand pardons, trusting to your kindness in future of not classing me with your ignorant neighbor, not even jokingly, for I cannot endure the sight of her. And now come with me to the back parlor, as I have something to say to you, and as that something is for your ears alone, it is not altogether safe to say it here.”

Millie felt no little curiosity concerning what it was Mrs. Porter had to communicate that called for so much secrecy, and as she followed her to the place designated, many conjectures presented themselves to her. However, she was soon to realize that none of her surmises were correct, and her pretty eyes opened wider than ever with surprise and curiosity when Mrs. Porter began the conversation by saying:

“Don’t go in the park to-night to meet Edgar; there is danger of you being seen by some one, who might possibly repeat the circumstance until it would reach the ears of your father.”

Millie did not reply to this, but stood regarding the woman with speechless wonder; and Mrs. Porter, in her soft, cooing tones, continued:

“You need not alarm yourself because I am aware of the little love affair between you and Edgar; the truth is,



I have known it all the time—that is to say, since I came to Ivy Crown—and you need not think for a moment that I would ever betray you, for if I did not want to shield you I would never have given you this warning. Believe me, I have your interest and welfare at heart.”

“Thank you; but tell me how did you learn of our arrangement for this evening.”

“Oh, a little bird brings me the news, especially when any such things as lovers’ meetings are going on,” Mrs. Porter replied, smiling down into the childish face, which then wore such an anxious, troubled look. Then, in a more serious tone, she resumed:

“Laying aside all jokes, Millie, I found your note, which Edgar no doubt dropped soon after receiving it, and seeing it was addressed to Edgar Wilkerson, in your handwriting, I took the liberty of reading it, fairly trembling at the thought of what would have been the result had it been Hetty who found it instead of myself. It was lying open on the veranda; just think of it.”

Still Millie seemed at a loss for words, remaining silent.

“I hope you will be guided by an older, if not a wiser, head, and not venture in Victoria Bower to-night, but send a message or a letter by some trusty person explaining why you could not come. By doing this at the very time you appointed, there will be no trouble in finding Edgar, for he will most assuredly be there, and whatever you do, avoid any talk with him to-night, for your father watches you very closely when you are in his company, hence you cannot be too particular. Promise me, Millie, that you will do as I have advised this evening.”



“Why, certainly, Mrs. Porter, I will promise you that I will not go, and thank you, too, for your kind advice. It was very silly in me to write and tell him to meet me, and if I had given the matter a second thought I would not have written. But where is the note, I will tear it up at once?” Millie ended, by asking, at the same time holding out her hand for it.

“I have saved you the trouble,” replied Mrs. Porter, pointing to fragments of paper that lay at their feet. “You see,” she went on, “that I brought it here to read for fear of intrusion.” And, to convince Millie more thoroughly, she knelt down on the carpet and picked up some of the pieces and handed Millie.

“Here is all that remains of it,” she said, smiling.

“Thank you again, Mrs. Porter; I do not doubt but what you have done your duty towards me, and I am quite satisfied that no one will ever take the trouble to read those bits of paper; so you can leave them where they are,” Millie said, brushing them from Mrs. Porter’s hand to the floor. Then the girl, feeling that she had judged Mrs. Porter wrongfully, held up her pretty lips to be kissed by this “modern Circe,” and said:

“And now, good-bye until dinner; I must find Rosalind.”

Mrs. Porter watched the pretty, lithe figure out of the room, and then a self-satisfied smile parted her lips. Well she knew why Millie was so anxious to find Rosalind, and she no longer entertained a doubt regarding the success of her ruse.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### GOOD-BYE TO NIAGARA.

WHEN Millie found Rosalind she was standing by one of the parlor windows taking a last lingering look at Niagara and its beautiful surroundings. The day was dying, and all the beauty of the view was enhanced by the radiant glow of a golden sunset, which fell upon the masses of green foliage, lovely flowers and sparkling fountains of Victoria Park, while beyond this it rested like a halo of glory, in all the gorgeous colors of the rainbow, upon the crowning wonder and beauty of the whole—Niagara.

Nothing in art or nature had ever so impressed Rosalind as this grand piece of nature's handiwork, and while she looked upon its magnificence and listened to its deep, penetrating and all-absorbing voice, she felt confident that earth held nothing that would ever appear half so beautiful to her sight, nor would any music ever fall upon her ear with such rhythmical melody as she had heard in the rushing waters of the cataract. What sweet memories, too, were associated with the place! and her heart leaped with joy as she recalled to mind that Gerald had almost confessed his love for her while amongst its hallowed haunts, yea, fully confessed it, in every lover-like way imaginable, and she no longer doubted its existence; hence, in the sweet halcyon days that were to come, when their lives would be interwoven in the bonds of



mutual sympathy and affection, she would look back with the most tender recollections to her first visit to Niagara.

From the happy reverie into which she had fallen, Millie's voice aroused her. "What are you dreaming about now?" she asked, coming close up beside her; "I really believe you would stand and gaze and gaze on the scene from this window forever, but as I am ready to go in the park you will have to tear yourself away, for the present at least, and since we are going away to-morrow, there is no telling when you will feast your eyes on those grand beauties again; 'it may be for years and it may be forever,'" Millie ended by singing out.

"I am ready," Rosalind replied, turning from the window with a little smothered sigh.

"But where is Nettie? she was at the piano when I came to the window," she added, seeing that no one was in the room except herself and Millie.

"Oh, she has gone off with Nellie; Edwin and Henry are going to take them for a walk, and I am truly glad of it, as I wanted you all to myself for a while."

A few minutes later the two girls were wandering among the sublime beauties of Victoria Park, and Millie broke the silence by saying, "Do you know, Rosa, I wrote Edgar to meet me in the bower to-night at ten o'clock, and something has occurred since to make some of our party suspicious, therefore I am afraid to venture out, so I thought I would ask you, dear, to be the bearer of a message to him for me; will you do this for me, Rosa?"

"What, at such a late hour?" asked Rosalind, sur-



prisedly. "Why can you not speak to him at dinner, Millie, and inform him of the fact that you can't keep the engagement?"

"That's just where the trouble lies, for he and Fred and Gerald have all gone out, and won't get back until after we have dined; besides this, papa is watching me closely, and I am afraid to speak to Edgar, so you see I am in a dilemma, and as usual have no one but you to help me out."

It was hard to deny Millie this, or anything else, for in the childish eyes there was irresistible pleading; but Rosalind felt conscientiously that she was doing Millie a wrong by continuing to humor her whims, and herself also, for had she not almost lost favor with Gerald by before complying with just such a request from Millie? What if he should again see her in company with Edgar Wilkerson? And it would look even worse at this place, at such a late hour, too, when the chilly atmosphere prevented ladies from going out after night. But she remembered that she had given Millie her promise that she would serve her in any way possible, little thinking what unreasonable requests the thoughtless girl would make of her.

"I feel it my duty, Millie, to beg of you to adopt some other mode than this of keeping up a secret correspondence with Edgar; would it not be better to tell your father everything than to practice deception upon him? Tell him, Millie, and trust to his generosity. Recollect, my dear friend, that no one loves you as well as he or would do more for your happiness; therefore I feel that I



am acting a dishonorable part by aiding you in such rashness."

"You do not care for me any longer, or you would not talk to me in this way, which is the same thing as refusing to do what I have asked you. As to telling papa, I might as well go and throw myself from Niagara, for he would never own me as his child again; you don't know him like I do, or you would not advise anything of the kind; but if you are disposed to look on the matter in such a gloomy light you need not trouble yourself further on my account."

As Millie continued to speak, tears choked her utterance, and great shining drops followed each other swiftly down her cheeks. It was the second time Rosalind had seen her weep since the camp-meeting, and felt very sorry to think that she had been the cause of her grief; furthermore, she saw plainly that such an argument as she had advanced was more than useless.

"It is painful to me, Millie, to understand that you have taken such a wrong view of what I have said to you. Indeed, you greatly mistake me by thinking for a moment that I do not care for you; it is because I care so much that prompted me to speak to you as I did; but dry your tears and cheer up, I will do what you ask me even if I suffer for it."

"Oh, thank you, Rosa, and please forgive me for my unkind words to you; I was so dreadfully disappointed and put out that I hardly knew what I said," exclaimed Millie, showering kisses and caresses on her companion and smiling sweetly upon her through a mist of tears.



Two hours later the party entered the diningroom en suite, and at their approach every eye was turned towards them, while whispered exclamations of admiration were exchanged between family groups, and glances expressive of the same from those having no one near with whom they were familiar enough to pass an opinion.

It was no wonder that every one was attracted, for those comprising Judge Underwood's party were decidedly the handsomest and most tastefully attired guests at the Clifton House. Upon that evening in particular their pre-eminence had asserted itself. Rosalind especially was generally admired; the perfect yet unstudied grace of manner that characterized her every movement had the effect of charming every one. Gerald observed this with great satisfaction, also how little she was aware of her extreme loveliness.

After dinner was over they were met in the parlor by Mr. and Mrs. Norton, and could not do otherwise than speak to them. However, the ladies were not bored by their uncongenial acquaintance, as they had anticipated, for Mrs. Norton was far too intent on having the attentions of the English lord undivided to give those beautiful young women a chance of capturing him; therefore the moment he entered the parlor and sought her side she expressed a wish to promenade on the veranda. At this Norton looked black, but made no remonstrance.

Later on that evening the Underwood party chanced to be the sole occupants of one of the pretty parlors, Gerald and the two cadets having returned in time to join the others in the diningroom had accompanied them hither, and all were apparently in the best of spirits.



"Give us a song, Gerry," cried Millie, as she observed her brother seat himself upon the music stool and run his fingers idly over the keys.

"Yes, give us a song, Gerald; it has been a long time since I have heard you sing," said the Judge, rising from his easy chair and going over to the piano.

"I think it a useless undertaking to try to get Gerald to sing for you, for, as father says, he has not been heard to sing for years, at least, by any of us," said Hetty.

"Well, that's no sign that he can't sing any more, for I have heard him sing when you were all asleep, and one of his songs is a daisy, I can tell you. Sing that one I heard you singing about 'sweetheart,' Gerry," said Fred, enthusiastically. And, to the surprise of every one present, Gerald responded by singing the first love song ever written by Eugene Field, entitled, "Be My Sweetheart."

"Sweetheart, be my sweetheart  
When birds are on the wing,  
When bee and bud and babbling flood  
Bespeak the birth of spring.  
Come, sweetheart, be my sweetheart,  
And wear the posy ring.

"Sweetheart, be my sweetheart  
When falls the bounteous year,  
When fruit and wine of tree and vine  
Give us their harvest cheer.  
Oh, sweetheart, be my sweetheart,  
For winter it draweth near.

"Sweetheart, be my sweetheart,  
When the year is white and old—  
When the fire of youth is spent forsooth !  
And the hand of age is cold.  
Yet, sweetheart, be my sweetheart,  
Till the year of our love be told."



And while Gerald sang that tender little love ballad—playing a soft accompaniment—every one in the room ceased their idle chat to listen; and not only they, but strangers in the adjoining parlor and elsewhere, thronged about the doorway to hear the song and get a glimpse of the owner of the full, rich baritone. Rosalind, too, listened entranced, for in those thrilling, pleading, passionate tones of entreaty, she realized that Gerald was singing to her, and though the others might listen, she alone should understand the depths and pathos he had thrown into every stanza.

Ah! would she ever forget that last happy evening at Niagara, and the song Gerald sung to her? And while she sat there silently contemplating upon this, Hetty and Mrs. Porter were exchanging knowing glances, for, in a vague, undefined manner, they, too, understood of whom Gerald was thinking while singing that song. Then Hetty looked at her watch, and found that it was twenty minutes past nine. What she had to do must be done quickly. Nellie, Nettie, Henry, Edwin, and Fred, all stood around the piano praising Gerald's vocal powers and insisting upon him giving them another song.

"If I could sing as well as you I wouldn't be so sparing with my voice; and just to think, this is the first song you have given us," said Henry, in a tone of rebuke.

"You will have to excuse Gerald for this evening, as I wish to speak to him," interrupted Hetty, approaching the group.

"Certainly, Miss Henrietta," and Henry Courts moved away from the piano.



Upon hearing his sister's voice beside him, Gerald arose and, offering her his arm, walked with her to the rear part of the room; then, placing her upon a divan, he seated himself beside her and asked:

“How can I serve you?”

“Oh, it is not a matter of any great importance; I only wanted to know what time we will leave here to-morrow?”

“About ten o'clock, I think; I suppose you have fully determined upon going, have you?” he asked, smiling.

“Yes, indeed! and I have had cause sufficient to seriously regret having come at all,” she returned, with a decided emphasis lingering upon each syllable.

“What!” exclaimed Gerald, surprisedly; “regret coming, and for what possible reason, pray?”

The days spent at Niagara had been to him as sweet as elysian dreams, hence he had not entertained a single thought that these days had not been enjoyed by all.

“Yes, it is true,” said Hetty, in reply to Gerald's astonished inquiry, “quite true,” she repeated, “that I regret coming here very much, or, at least, that I had not left some of the party behind.”

“Gerry, do come over and help us persuade Miss Rosalind to sing,” called Edwin from the other side of the room.

“I fear my intercession will be of little use since you have failed, Edwin; however, we would all very much enjoy a song,” replied Gerald, rising and bowing in his usual high-bred manner.

Meanwhile, all the young men had gathered around Rosalind asking for a song, but she continued firm in her refusal.



"Please excuse me this evening—I can not; it is impossible," was all she said in response to their solicitations. She did not plead a headache, as most girls do at such a time, for she was not ill, and her love of truth did not admit of bringing forward a falsehood by way of excuse. But after listening to Gerald's singing, with all the tender pathos and lingering sweetness of his tones still echoing in her ears, and falling upon her senses with such soothing effect, she felt that it would be perfect sacrilege to thus expel such cherished notes from her charmed memory; truly, it was impossible for her to sing.

During this interlude Hetty had found new fuel to add to the flames which had been all day kindling towards Rosalind, for while observing the attention the girl was then receiving, she felt that this was the most suitable time and place to unfold to Gerald the knowledge she had that day received of her, and show him the note she still retained in her possession.

"Truly, a very queen Guinevere," was her indignant exclamation, when Gerald again turned his attention to her.

"I haven't the least idea of whom you are speaking, Henrietta; in fact, it appears that you have been dealing in riddles ever since our conversation began, and now will you be so kind as to unravel some of them, as I am too dull this evening to attempt it?"

"Who else could so well deserve the term as she?" Hetty replied, nodding in the direction of Rosalind.

"Least of all womankind would I think the term applicable to her," said Gerald, with much warmth.



"I am sorry to disturb the serenity of your bright illusions and arouse you to a sense of your folly, but it seems that matters have reached such a crisis that I am compelled to speak, as further delay may prove disastrous; you need not look so surprised at my words; reserve your astonishment for what I have yet to tell you; it is of Rosalind Morton that I wished to speak."

Upon hearing this Gerald made an impatient gesture, and said:

"Spare me, Henrietta, you should know me well enough to understand my dislike of anything that savors of gossip."

"But you must hear me; what I am going to tell you is not for the sake of gossiping, but it is necessary that you and father both should hear of Miss Morton's imprudent conduct while making one of our party, and she in daily intercourse with Millie, too; so if you doubt my word in the least, read this note and be convinced, as I was."

There was an unusual flush of excitement on Hetty's cheek and the tone of her voice bespoke the same as she handed him the little crumpled note addressed to Edgar Wilkerson in Rosalind's handwriting.

As Gerald read the address a shudder passed over him and his face became colorless, but Henrietta was watching him with a smile, which spoke more of contempt than amusement, and with a great effort he controlled his shocked emotions sufficiently to say:

"This letter is addressed to Edgar Wilkerson, and neither you nor I have any right to read it, Henrietta; how came it in your possession?"



“Chance alone has placed it in my way, and since it has served to open my eyes to the fact of the indiscretions of this girl, it is fortunate that I came across it. At any rate, I took the liberty of reading it.”

“I am ashamed to think you would have done such a thing; instead you should have returned it to the legitimate owner.”

Gerald's voice sounded harsh to Henrietta; she did not conceive of the cruel disappointment which was rankling at his heart and oppressing his breath; profound emotions and grand passions were unknown to her, and she felt that it was herself instead of Rosalind upon whom her brother was sitting in judgment. But she was not to be thwarted in her intentions.

“You refuse to read the note, but you cannot prevent me from expressing my opinion upon the subject, which is this: when a girl so far forgets the respect that is due those who have been kind and patronizing towards her as to write notes to a young man, asking him to meet her in a place almost unfrequented after dark, and at the late hour of ten o'clock, she should no longer be tolerated by those who have taken an interest in her; and tho' you have censured me for reading her note, I do not think I have taken any undue liberty, especially under the existing circumstances. I did not know, when I gave Millie permission to invite her to make one of our party, that she was one of those romantic, mysterious young ladies who rather preferred meeting a gentleman at ten o'clock at night in Victoria bower than in one of the pleasant parlors of the Clifton House, and I feel confident that such a



person is not nor has ever been a suitable companion for Millie; hence I have made up my mind that her acquaintance with Rosalind Morton must end; and that is one reason why we should not remain here longer, and the chief one why our tour will not be extended to other points; and I trust that you will remember, too, that after our return this girl will no longer be received as a guest at Ivy Crown."

Gerald heard his sister through, without any other betrayal of emotion than that of his increasing pallor, but tho' his outer calmness had remained unbroken, her words had smote upon his heart like the thrust of a dagger, and as he realized the immeasurable chasm that now separated him from the woman he had come to worship, he felt that he could not endure his agonized feelings another moment without betraying them to Hetty.

"It is not my affair, and you may be sure I will not intermeddle; and now, if you will excuse me, I will go out for a smoke," he managed to say, as he left her and walked mechanically out of the room.

Hetty did not attempt to detain him longer, but her eyes followed him curiously as she pondered his seemingly indifferent reply.

"He does not appear to be the least exercised, and after all Mrs. Porter's conjectures and my foolish fears, it may have been only imagination, but no doubt he is on the same terms of intimacy with her as Edgar Wilkerson;" such was her mental conclusion as he disappeared through the doorway.

How different would she have thought had she seen



him a few moments later, for no sooner was he alone than his face became apparently drawn and haggard, and a look of complete hopelessness settled upon it, pitiful to see. Once in the outer world with the radiant beauty of the night hovering over him, and the deliciously cool breeze blowing upon him, Gerald tried to think and reason with himself in that critical, logical way, that had characterized his thoughts and actions previous to meeting Rosalind. But alas! it was impossible, for his powerful will and practical judgment seemed to have both deserted him. He felt as though his very brain was on fire. What was he to do, and how was he to bring himself to the realism that Rosalind—whom he had believed as pure as the snow—had deceived him, and to all appearances was as false as she was fair. “Why was it,” he asked himself repeatedly, “that just at the time when he had rid himself of all doubts and fears concerning she and Edgar Wilkerson, this new contingency should arise? Was it only for the purpose of overthrowing all his hopes and baffling all his joyful expectations that fate had thrown her in his way and caused his heart to go out to her in all the beauty and grandeur of a noble love? And, after all, was it possible that Hetty’s suggestions, regarding her as being another Queen Guinevere, were correct? and did he (Gerald) only hold the place in Rosalind’s heart that Lancelot had shared with the other lovers of King Arthur’s fickle queen?”

Thus it was that all these queries rose up, phantom-like, to confront him as he wearily paced up and down an unfrequented portion of the veranda which lay in shadow.



And as they crowded in rapid succession upon his mental vision, he became more and more bewildered each moment. Scarcely twenty minutes had elapsed since he left the piano, yet it seemed to him that years had passed slowly by since he had heard Hetty's voice denouncing Rosalind. Suddenly he stopped; then, with an involuntary movement, he passed down the steps of the veranda, and turned in the direction of Victoria Park, while, as one under the influence of a sinister dream, he wandered on, conscious only of his powerlessness to awaken from it. There was no one visible about the flower-laden grounds, and all was quiet save the stupendous roar of the falls and the fluttering wings of two or three birds, which, startled by the sound of footsteps, flew low restlessly, as if the breaking of their repose had rendered them uncertain where to find safety in another resting-place. For a little while after Gerald entered, he wandered aimlessly about, then, with a vague expectation, scarcely definable, he sat down on a rustic seat near the entrance, where, having a distinct view of his surroundings, he was completely concealed from observation by the heavy-foliaged plants about him. To a man like Gerald, possessing all the finer intricacies of emotion, which are the attributes of highly-cultured and refined temperaments, the idea of having come there for the purpose of spying upon the actions of Rosalind was loathsome to him; but, in his present state of mind, he was only dimly conscious of the dishonor attached to such a proceeding; for, as Ouida says, "confidence, like a swallow coming over the seas in the storm and sunshine of



spring weather, will only nest where it is sure of a safe shelter," hence the higher and better emotions of the human heart want to be sure that they are being safely anchored after having once been storm-tossed.

And so it was with Gerald. His former experience had taught him how little of faithfulness belonged to women; and now he felt that, in spite of the worshipful love he had bestowed upon Rosalind, if it be true that she was deceiving him, should the knowledge of it prove his death warrant, it were far better that he should know it. And while he pondered all these unhappy truths that had been forced upon him, a yet deeper stillness had stolen over the flowers, vines, and evergreens of the lovely place; all nature had apparently sunk into sweet repose, when suddenly a step sounded on the walk. The next moment a man entered the park and passed up the avenue of dark green, which led to Victoria bower, and, while he sauntered leisurely along, a song burst from his lips. It was the voice of Edgar Wilkerson, and he seemed wooing the loved one—whoever she might be—with his soft, flowing tones, while he sang—

“Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls.  
Come hither, the dancers are done,  
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,  
Queen lily and rose in one;  
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,  
To the flowers, and be their sun.”

And while these beautiful lines of Lord Tennyson rose and fell in rhythmical measure upon the flower-scented air, Gerald's heart stood still. The thought that he, too,



had associated Rosalind with the poet's beautiful "Maud," thrust itself upon him in the most cruel and mocking fashion, and caused him to realize more clearly than ever that the great passion of his life had gone like all other great passions—receiving no return. While he sat there in this half-dazed state, trying to recall the many such *affaires d'amour* that had come under his observation, another step sounded upon the walk which led into the park, and a woman's form appeared within range of his vision. A dark ulster was thrown over her, concealing from view the evening attire, which she presumably wore, and as she moved swiftly along, Gerald could not have been sure it was Rosalind had not a sudden glare from an electric light flashed full upon her face, disclosing to him its every lovely feature, and now he needed no further evidence in the matter, for truly, "what the eyes see, the heart believeth." Then it was that the face of the man, sitting there so statue-like, underwent a still greater change. In that moment it seemed to turn to stone; all the life died out of it, and it grew still and rigid as death. It was no trouble to go out of the park unobserved, hence with little consciousness of what he was doing, Gerald passed out of the palm-sheltered nook and made his way towards the hotel, feeling that within the last half hour he had grown old, and that all his heart's blood, drop by drop, had frozen within his bosom.

Behind a half closed blind of her chamber window, Mrs. Porter was watching for Gerald's return, having not failed to see him leave the parlor, and knowing intuitively where he had gone; therefore, she was the first, and per-



haps the only one, who saw him coming from the park at that time, and a cry of supreme joy was upon her lips when she realized that her every wish had been fulfilled, having already ascertained from Millie that Rosalind had gone to deliver her message to Edgar. But as he drew nearer, and the wily woman had a better view of his face, she felt terrified by its exceeding pallor. Indeed, she could have scarcely recognized in the white, haggard features and uncertain gait, the handsome, self-poised man of an hour ago. True, the night was chilly—as all nights are at Niagara—but surely that was not the cause of the agitation that was shaking his form.

“Gracious heavens! how haggard he looks,” was her mental cogitation as he walked up the steps of the veranda; “I wonder if his disillusion has so seriously affected him, or am I giving away to my imagination? However it may be, he belonged to me first, and it was my right to disenchant him with the fair Rosalind, ‘queen of roses,’ ha, ha! But I trust this is the coup de grace to her short-lived queenship. As to Gerald, he will soon get over this, as he did an earlier love affair which I happen to know something about.”

Then humming an air from the latest French opera, Mrs. Porter left the window, feeling highly pleased over the wonderful success of her undertaking. Had she waited five minutes later she would have seen Rosalind also returning from Victoria Park, with white cheeks and sorrowful mien. She, too, was trembling, for into her heart there had stolen a vague tho’ undefined fear of coming evil that weighed heavy upon her. Millie was in



their room anxiously awaiting her return, and as soon as she caught a glimpse of Rosalind's white face, exclaimed, in a horrified tone:

“Why, Rosa, what in the world is the matter? you are as white as a ghost.”

“Nothing is the matter, Millie, nothing, only I feel cold and sadly out of spirits.”

“And is that all? I was afraid some one had frightened you or spoken rudely to you on seeing you out alone.”

“No, I am thankful to say nothing of that kind has occurred,” Rosalind replied; then in as few words as possible she delivered Edgar's message, and ended by begging Millie that she would not continue those secret communications with Edgar Wilkerson longer. “You know, Millie,” she went on, “that there is nothing I would not do to promote your welfare and happiness; but as I told you this afternoon, I feel that I am doing wrong to encourage you in this disobedient course you are pursuing. Besides, I am almost alone in the world, and should I have been seen meeting a gentleman at such a late hour as this, who knows what impressions would have been left upon the minds of those who might have observed me?”

“I am surprised at you, Rosalind! who could possibly be so mean as to think ill of you?” said Millie, innocently; then putting her arms about Rosalind affectionately, she kissed her upon cheeks, lips and brow.

At this moment a rap sounded upon the door, and when Millie opened it a telegram was handed her, addressed to Rosalind.



"Read it, Rosa, and I will sign the book for you," said Millie, handing the dispatch to her and taking the book from the messenger; but when the door closed after the vanishing form of the boy, Rosalind was still holding the telegram in her hand unopened. She had sunk into a chair, perfectly overcome.

"Let me read it for you, Rosa," said Millie, taking it from her hand and tearing it open.

"Your aunt is very ill; come at once," so ran the communication, which was signed by Grandmother Underwood.

A low moan broke from Rosalind's white lips, and in a choked voice she said:

"Ring, Millie, and find out when the first south-bound train is due here; I cannot wait till morning, and will go at once if it is possible."

Then rising, she went over to where sat her trunk and commenced to rearrange its contents.

"Surely you are not going to start alone; papa, or Gerry, or some of the gentlemen will be but too pleased to go with you," replied Millie, complying with Rosalind's request by ringing.

"Yes, alone; Aunt Vilinda is very ill, perhaps dying, and I cannot wait until to-morrow. There will be no difficulty in making the changes all right, and I do not want you to say anything about my going until after I have gone; it is entirely unnecessary to trouble any one to go with me, so I will make my arrangements as quietly as possible."

Millie saw the determination written upon Rosalind's



face, and seeing, too, that she was suffering immeasurably, she refrained from urging her further. In answer to the bell a servant came, and upon being questioned, informed Rosalind that a train going south would leave at eleven thirty P. M.; hence with Millie's assistance Rosalind had soon packed her trunk and given the necessary orders regarding her baggage, etc.

Tho' Judge Underwood supposed it understood by all the party that to travel under his escort implied *tout frais fait*, Rosalind completed her arrangements for leaving the Clifton House by sending for the clerk and promptly paying her bill. The good old aunt had not failed to supply her with money sufficient to defray all expenses, at the same time instructing her to attend to this, and notwithstanding Millie's strong remonstrances against such a proceeding, Rosalind remained firm in complying with her Aunt Vilinda's wishes. Then the train which was to bear her so far away from the place that had so fascinated her was announced as coming, and nothing remained for her but to bid Millie a tearful adieu and take a last loving, lingering look at beautiful Niagara.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### EVENTS OF A SUMMER NIGHT.

SOME writer has said that the future sometimes seems to sob a low warning of the events it is bringing us, and at other times it bursts suddenly as if a rock had rent and a grave had opened, from whence issues the body of one who slept, and ere you are aware of it you stand face to face with a shrouded and unthought of calamity.

And just so swiftly, just so unexpectedly, had the tide changed for Rosalind, who, upon that morning, had awoke with a heart overflowing with happiness, to find herself before the ushering in of another day, burdened with grief and sorrowful foreboding. As the train sped onward, she chided herself remorsefully for leaving her old aunt, when she might have remained at home with her and waited upon, comforting and soothing her in her illness. Thus she thought regretfully, while she tossed restlessly upon her berth, totally unable to find peaceful slumber. And again her thoughts would turn to Gerald with that trustful warmth of affection which belongs to youth and innocence alone. She pictured to herself his surprise and grief upon hearing from Millie of her hasty summons home. "I should have left him a line or two, saying good-bye, if nothing more; but he will understand my feelings and know how to excuse my apparent negligence, and he will think of me and sympathize with me in my trouble, and, though I am far away from him, his



heart will be with me, for he loves me; yes, proud and grand though he be, he loves me."

Poor girl. Little did she suspect, even at that moment, he was thinking of her bitterly, and striving with all the will that remained to him to tear her lovely image from his heart, and remember her only as one in whom he had fondly trusted, alas! to be so cruelly deceived. No, happily for her, she was spared this knowledge, for the weight at her heart was already great enough without this additional burden.

And now, kind reader, we will leave Rosalind to continue her homeward journey, and return to the Clifton House. Judge Underwood had sat in the smokingroom ever since dinner, chatting with Sir Alfred Clarmont and Lord Percy Mountjoy, the other two Englishmen who had accompanied Lord Harry Waverly to the Falls. Norton, too, made one of the company, and while he listened to the trio converse—occasionally reiterating the Judge's remarks—Lord Waverly was basking in the sunshine of Mrs. Norton's smiles; indeed, it seemed that the acquaintance of these two had progressed rapidly within the last few days, and, though the fastidious lord had mentally dubbed the ignorant woman, "Mrs. Malaprop," he had never ceased to flatter her upon her good English, and had unblushingly pronounced her crude speeches *leux d' esprit*; at the same time, however, estimating upon the value of each softly-spoken word. Lord Waverly was playing his cards to win, and diamonds were trumps. Meanwhile, during this little game—which may be termed progressive euchre—Judge Underwood and



the two Englishmen having discussed all the topics of the day, had launched upon the subject of American finance, a question in which the world-at-large seems greatly interested, the English particularly. This theme the Judge had tried to avoid, for his native pride regarding the country, which had been the joy of his forefathers, had received shock after shock as he had come to realize how its former glory had faded into insignificance, until he had ceased to talk about and deplore the situation. But something Sir Alfred said served to awaken his sleeping ire, and he instantly became excited. "Yes, sir; I will admit our country is no longer one to be proud of, for the government that George Washington so nobly instituted is totally wrecked, and we are a disgraced people, which can only be accounted for in one way, namely: Thirty years ago Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States—then the happiest and most prosperous country under the sun—who immediately declared the freedom of the negroes, to which the South rebelled, the result of this you are of course all aware. The negroes were then given the right of voting, and, together with the constant flow of foreign emigration that has for years been swelling the tide of humanity, this majority has elected men to fill offices of trust and honor who were in no wise worthy of such positions; hence, true American citizens have suffered the disgrace of the acts that these fraudulent usurpers have perpetrated. I tell you, sirs, were it possible for Washington—the father of our country—to realize the depth to which it has fallen, he would weep tears of blood. The frauds, the mercenary motives of



legislators and statesmen, moreover, the heavy debt that is hanging over us, I tell you, sirs, Mephistopheles himself would weep to see the havoc that has been wrought in our beautiful land."

It was evident that the Kentucky Judge was much exercised over the present state of affairs, and his auditors, not wishing to further exasperate him, remained silent. However, he had not finished, for after pausing a few moments and taking a few hurried strides about the room, he stopped close beside Lord Mountjoy and continued:

"You English landlords talk of the baseness and treachery amongst your peasantry, and the probability of a general uprising; why, sir," he vociferated, shaking his forefinger in the Englishman's face, "it would be nothing compared to what the Southerner suffered from the negroes, who were their rightful property. Think of the monstrosity of it, those black wretches fighting against good masters, who had fed and clothed them, paid their doctor's bills, and in every way caring for them and supplying their wants. And now that the race is free amongst us, they use their right of citizenship by selling their votes for a few paltry dollars, or a few drinks of whiskey, and that is why we have a regular team of billy goats representing us. As to social equality with the race, that is the most preposterous of all ideas. God never intended them as our equals, and they are only fit to be our subordinates and serve us. In this capacity they are far happier than in any other, for nothing satisfies them half so well as working under the supervision of a master."



When Judge Underwood ceased speaking his voice had almost sunk to a whisper, and it was but too evident to the other gentlemen present that he was well nigh exhausted. However, he still managed to keep his standing position, and looked from one to the other as if expecting some one of the three to answer him.

"I quite agree with you, sir, on some points," replied Lord Mountjoy; "I have traveled over the Southern States, and consequently learned the relative position of the two races. There is truly no doubt that under the present administration of the United States the negroes are a disadvantage to you, but what will you do with them?"

"The only way I see out of the dilemma is to colonize them; the government is far better able to buy them lands and emigrate them than to support their schools. Just think of it, there is not one negro out of a hundred who owns any taxable property, hence it falls to the lot of the white man to keep up these institutions, which, instead of civilizing and Christianizing them, only add to their bigotry and conceit, for, as a rule, they are totally void of gratitude and good principles. I am not prejudiced against the negro race, but on the contrary, have always felt an interest in their welfare, and all that I have expressed is based upon experimental knowledge of their character."

"And you have said nothing but the truth about them throughout," said Norton, who had listened, with more animation than was usual for him to exhibit, to everything the Judge had said.



“Papa, may I speak to you a moment?” said Millie, appearing suddenly in the doorway.

“Certainly, Camille; go in the parlor, and I will join you there in a little while.”

Surprised to see his daughter searching for him at that late hour, Judge Underwood threw down his cigar, and bidding the gentlemen a hasty good night, followed Millie to the parlor. He found her quite alone, all the rest of the ladies having retired to their rooms. The girl looked anxious, and in answer to her father’s inquiry as to what she wished of him, she replied:

“I waited up, papa, to tell you that Rosalind started for home this evening.”

“Started for home this evening!” reiterated the Judge, in a tone of astonishment.

“Yes, papa, grandmamma sent her a telegram informing her that her aunt was very ill, instructing her to come at once, so she got ready and left on the train that went out at eleven thirty, and I could not persuade her to let Gerry or some of the gentlemen of our party know that she was going and accompany her, for I was quite sure you would not have suffered her to go alone; but she would not let me tell you anything about it, and seemed so determined that I found it was useless to try to dissuade her.”

“Miss Morton should not have done this, at least not without consulting me; remember, Millie, girls of such a tender age must not be left to their own sweet will; after all the good opinion with which I had learned to regard this girl, I fear she is too willful to have deserved it, and



I shall be more careful in future to know something of the disposition of girls whom you select for associates."

Gerald, on his way to his room, was passing the parlor when his father's voice fell on his ear; involuntarily he paused at the door in time to hear his words concerning Millie's association, hence he thought that Hetty had communicated the same to his father that she had to him; and wishing to avoid again hearing a discussion of the subject, he hastened on, but he was not, as he thought, unobserved, his father had discovered him.

"Gerald, I wish you would come in a moment," he called, as he was about to mount the steps, and obedient to his father's wishes, the son turned about and stood again beside the parlor door, keeping in the shadow as much as possible, for he was conscious of looking ill and troubled and did not wish to be interrogated.

"What do you think, Gerald? Miss Morton has taken a very unceremonious leave of us this evening," were his father's words of greeting as he stopped just without and waited to hear what it was he wished of him.

"Great heaven!" Gerald exclaimed, under his breath, "has she eloped with Edgar?"

This was the first thought that entered his bewildered mind, and when he tried to make some reply to his father it was impossible for him to utter a syllable. But the Judge, too much engrossed with his subject to notice Gerald's strange manner, continued:

"I have learned through Millie of this young lady's departure, and tho' I regret to hear of Miss Vilinda's illness, it does not excuse her niece's headstrong conduct;



who would have thought of her leaving here without consulting me?"

Gerald experienced much relief upon hearing this, for no matter how great had been his disillusion, he was not prepared for the shock the news of Rosalind's elopement would have caused him.

"How did you hear of Miss Morton's illness?" he managed to ask, and after his father had explained about the telegram he turned and walked away. Then seeing Edgar approaching, he advanced a few steps to meet him, and asked sternly, "Have you heard the news?"

"No," replied Edgar, "nothing serious, I hope," at the same time thinking that Gerald's face went to prove that such was the case.

"Miss Vilinda Morton is ill and her niece was telegraphed for; she left Niagara to-night alone."

While he spoke he did not move his eyes from Edgar's face, thinking to see a betrayal of feeling on his part upon being informed that Rosalind had gone alone upon such a long journey. But not so, for there came no change over Edgar's face, and he replied simply enough, "I am sorry," just as any one would have replied upon hearing of the illness of a neighbor or a mere acquaintance.

"Good God!" soliloquized Gerald, between his clinched teeth, "has the man no feeling, that he can stand here in this unconcerned manner and hear of Rosalind, to whom he was perhaps scarcely two hours ago plighting his troth, taking this sorrowful journey alone? Can it be that after all he is only a gay Lothario, who has no purpose in



gaining her affection but to amuse himself? By heaven! if I knew to a certainty that he had wronged her, I would make him rue the day he ever crossed my path," he continued, still keeping his eyes fixed defiantly on Edgar.

"There will be another train leaving here for the South between one and two o'clock. Will you go down on that one?" he asked, abruptly.

"No, indeed! why should I? nothing has called me home. Really, Gerald, you talk strangely, and, pardon me for saying it, you look as strangely as you speak."

Gerald would have, no doubt, given him a cutting answer had not Millie interrupted them by appearing in their midst just at this time.

"What's the matter, Gerry?" she asked, alarmedly, upon catching sight of her brother's white face. "Surely you are ill; never saw you look so before. Say, what is the matter?"

"It is true, Millie, that I am not feeling very well, but as it is only a headache you need not be alarmed. I am going to bed now and see if I can sleep it off; good night."

He tried to smile as he spoke, but his lips seemed stiff and nerveless, and his voice had in it an unnatural sound which Millie did not fail to observe. She noticed, too, how his face had changed, not only with the pallor that it wore, but it appeared as if it had been suddenly robbed of all its freshness and youth. Upon reaching his room, the first object Gerald's eyes rested upon was Fred. The boy was fast asleep sitting by the window as if he had waited up for his brother until he had at last succumbed



to tired nature. For some moments he stood looking at the sleeper, as if lost in deep thought. He was thinking of his own happy youth, and comparing it with his present misery, and there stole into his countenance an expression of pity which blended strangely with that of bitter disappointment. He recalled his first term at college—the efforts, the pains. The successes of that first year at Frankfort appeared to him now a ghastly mistake. He was not but a year older than Fred at that time, but his ambition to win and wear laurels of glory took possession of him, and caused him to put aside all his boyish pleasures. And on and on through life it had been the same, striving for the higher, nobler life, reaching far out for the unattainable. What fruition had he reaped by all this knowledge? What good had all his triumphs done him? for life had been full of disappointments, and at best seemed shallow and worthless. “Poor, weak, human nature,” he muttered; then called Fred, waking him from his peaceful slumber to make him get ready for retiring.

“You look as though you were all out of sorts, Gerry,” said the younger brother, rousing up and giving him a scrutinizing glance of mingled pity and affection.

“I am not feeling exactly well, Fred, but it is nothing more serious than a headache; I will be all right by morning; so go to sleep and dream of your English lord,” he added, with a poor attempt at a smile.

“You are more after my idea of a lord, and are worth a dozen, yes, a thousand, such as he,” replied the boy, sleepily, as the heavy lids closed and his unfettered mind drifted into the far-away realms of dreamland.



Long hours afterward, Gerald sat there thinking deeply. He remembered another night only a short time prior to this, before leaving Ivy Crown, when he had kept just such a vigil, and he also called to mind the many resolves he had made on that night, which, under the influence of Rosalind's presence, had melted away like snow beneath the sunshine. Now the veil was torn away, and he saw himself as he really was—the slave of feeling, whose empire he had for eight years laughed to scorn. But he had been happy during that short-lived dream, and though the awakening caused him to feel a sore contempt for his weakness and lack of self-knowledge, he could not deny that those had been days fraught with delight, the most exquisite, when he had allowed his heart to go out to her in all the fullness and completeness of its great love. Having outlived the quick growing love of the boy, he had now acknowledged to his soul that the peace and joy and well-being of his whole future life depended upon this lovely girl. The world and everything pertaining to it had suddenly enlarged and beautified into the loveliest of abodes that his imagination had ever pictured, and the stern cynical second nature, which he had made for himself, had passed away, as if he had died and been resurrected into a new being. And after all, was he doomed to realize the lonely and blighted life that now stretched out before him? “Alas for human hopes and human joys; were they all to end in this way?” he queried, while his heart grew sick and faint beneath the load of this terrible certainty, and dropping his face in his hands, in the anguish of his spirit he groaned aloud.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### A SORROWFUL HOME-COMING.

[T was late in the afternoon of the second day of Rosalind's journey when she reached Livingston station, and it was with a heavy heart that she stepped upon the platform. The weather had suddenly changed within the last few hours, and a fine, misty rain was falling, rendering the atmosphere chill and disagreeable; but it was not this alone that caused the girl to shudder while she stood there gazing out upon the blurred landscape and sombre-hued sky. A dread feeling of expectancy had seized hold of her with an ominous warning. She had telegraphed old Mrs. Underwood the night she left Niagara at what time she might be expected to arrive at home; hence felt confident that Peter would meet her, and, true to her expectation, she soon discovered the Morton carriage, some distance off, slowly approaching, and waited in breathless anxiety for news of her aunt. But the question died upon her lips as the vehicle drew near and she had a closer view of Peter's face, for already she divined the sad truth. "Aunt Vilinda is either dead or dying?" she gasped, as the horses came to a standstill, and she stood confronting Peter. "Dead, Miss Rosalin, clean dead and gone; she gib up her gost las' night, and we am all lef' behind," replied the old servant, taking off his hat and greeting Rosalind in his usually humble manner, and while he bowed his white



head, great tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks, and long-drawn sobs heaved his breast. But Rosalind did not hear the finishing clause of Peter's sentence, for with his first words a perfect storm of grief had burst forth, while every little while between her anguished mourns would come the plaintive cry, "Dead, dead, Aunt Vilinda dead, and again I am alone."

Such had been the refrain of her sorrowful wail when her father had passed away, and now she realizes that she is again bereft of all that remained to her whom she could claim as a relation; no other kind old aunt was waiting to take her to her home and heart as this dear, good woman had done; alas! her's was a lonely lot indeed. And while she recalled the fact that less than one year ago she had seen the earth cover her dear father, and now the grave would also rob her of the one who had so kindly sheltered her and in a way filled his place, her heart felt full of bitterness, and she asked herself "if it could be possible that such a thing as fate hung over the lives of mortals, and, if such was true, was she one of the ill-fated?"

The dim afternoon was fast darkening into night as the carriage passed through the gloomy woods to Morton Place, and Rosalind told herself that in all her future life she would never forget that drive; the picture of that desolate scene would stamp itself upon her memory forever. The semi-darkness, the unceasing drip, drip of the rain, the sighing of the wind as it swayed the heavily foliaged trees, the lonely marshes below and the dark scudding clouds above. Never since the night of her father's death had sights and sounds so painfully impressed her,



and looking back to that memorable night, it seemed that she, too, had died. She had heard it said that during our lives we die many times before we are laid away, and then it was that the conviction of the truth of this theory came forcibly to her.

At last Morton Place was reached, and as Rosalind moved slowly up the walk she was vaguely conscious of that strange stillness and solemnity that seems always to hover about the house of death. At the door she was met by Marietta, who, with streaming eyes, took her hand, as if she was only a little child, and led her into the sitting room, where she had kindled a comfortable fire for the purpose of driving away the dampness.

“Set down right here, Miss Rosalin, and let me fetch you a strong cup of tea,” said the faithful negress, placing Rosalind in an easy chair and stirring up the fire.

And Rosalind, chill and sick at heart, felt constrained to do her bidding. Resting thus while Marietta went to prepare her tea, she looked around the familiar walls, where, together with her Aunt Vilinda, she had sat so often, listening to her talk and learning the many useful lessons she had taught her, when suddenly she heard a low, clucking sound, coming from a distant part of the room, and turning her head in that direction her eyes rested on Polly. The sight of the bird was too pitiful, and caused Rosalind a fresh gush of tears, for if ever grief was depicted upon any living thing, it was in every movement of the disconsolate looking parrot. Crouched upon the lowest perch of its cage, with its head tucked down, and half-closed eyes, rocking to and fro with



the same restless motion that its mistress had always assumed when worried or perplexed over anything, Polly indeed presented a most woeful picture. Rosalind went over to the bird and opened the door of the cage and smoothed her ruffled plumage, at the same time speaking to her softly. Upon hearing the girl's voice, Polly gave a satisfactory little chuckle, and then again lapsed into a solemn silence.

"Won't Polly come to Rosa?" she asked, holding out her hand. But Polly only rocked herself more rapidly, and cried out, "All sick, all sick, Misses sick, Polly sick, all so sick, so sick; hello Polly! poor Polly, poor Polly."

The shrill tones sank lower and lower as the bird repeated these phrases, and it seemed to Rosalind that in its voice, too, there was a sound of a sob.

"Poor Polly, poor Polly," she reiterated, sadly, as she turned from the cage with blinding tears and took the cup of tea from Marietta's hand. After swallowing a few spoonfuls, she put the cup down, saying:

"I am ready, Marietta; take me to see Aunt Vilinda."

The old negress motioned her to follow, and led the way to the old-fashioned parlor, where lay all that remained of the most worthy woman. The room was dimly lighted, and Rosalind did not see who were the watchers, but went straight up to where lay the body of her sainted relative. Very gently and lovingly did the faithful Marietta remove the white drapery and disclose to Rosalind the waxen-like face and stiffened form of the dead. For some moments she stood gazing down upon the calm, still face, with its firmly closed lips and steady pose of



features, and she realized that her death, like her life, had been serenely fearless and tranquil, and tried to feel consoled by believing that her spirit had found perpetual joy in that land of the blessed. But when she remembered her own solitary life, a swift revulsion of feeling begun within her, and, try as she would, she could not stay the tide of rebellious queries that rose to her lips. Why was it that she had been deprived of a mother's love and care, even in her earliest babyhood, and why had her father been snatched away from her just when she most needed his protection? And now, to make her isolation complete, the only one that had remained to her had gone the way of all the rest. While these incomprehensible enigmas rose up to confront her, she sat down beside the body of the dead woman in a dazed kind of way that frightened her; she wondered if she was going mad, such a strange, dizzy feeling had come darkly over her. Then, completely overcome, she fell into a deep, death-like swoon.

"The poor child has fainted plum dead away," said Mrs. Wilkerson, advancing hurriedly from the other part of the room. "Run and get me the campfire, Marietta; run this instant, and tell Peter to come here quick; we must get her out of here before she comes to her senses."

And while Mrs. Wilkerson applied the camphor, Marietta ran to find Peter, wringing her hands and crying as she went. She found Peter in the kitchen huddled together with his late Mistress' cats, who seemed to be listening for the well-known voice to call them to supper, which was, alas, silenced in death. The group made an-



other sad picture, but it was one that Marietta did not take time to contemplate, for, upon seeing Peter, she cried out:

“Go to de parler! go quick, for Miss Roslin done fainted clar away!”

“Dar, I done tole you so, dat hits more than likely de Lord will take her, too,” replied Peter, hurrying to the room where the young girl lay back in her chair, white and motionless, and lifting her in his arms as though she was an infant.

“Take her up to her room, Peter, and lay her on the bed, and I will tend to her, de poor lamb,” said Marietta, as he bore the inanimate form of the girl from the presence of the dead.

In her own room, under the judicious care of the old servant, Rosalind soon recovered consciousness; but she was spared the realism of her new sorrow by the sleeping potion at once administered by Mrs. Wilkerson, the result of which being a restful slumber. When she awoke on the following morning the sun was shining brightly; not one vestige of yesterday's gloom remained. For some time after awakening, Rosalind was unable to recall the occurrences of the last few days; but when she had collected her thoughts sufficiently to remember everything the sad reality went to her heart like a heavy blow; yet out of all this chaos of grief and loneliness there came one gleam of hope and comfort, and like a bright star that shines out from a darkened sky over a weary and belated traveler, so it was that this radiance shone out, illumining her night.



“Gerald loves me,” she murmured. “After all my sorrow, God has been very good to me, and I am not left alone, for he is the truest and noblest man living, and I know that he will sympathize with me with his whole heart.”

Thus buoyed up by this hope and trust, she arose from her bed, made her toilette and went down stairs. Mrs. Wilkerson and one of her daughters were already seated at the breakfast table when Rosalind entered, and, seating herself near the matron, she made inquiries concerning her aunt's death.

“It was her same old complaint, Miss, that ailed her—neuralgia. The doctors said it got to her heart, and that is what took her off,” said Mrs. Wilkerson, in reply to Rosalind's question.

The niece continued silent, and she went on:

“You see, I hadn't been over to see the old lady for a spell; so one day last week I sent the girls over to see how she was gitting along, being that you was gone, and thay come back and sed Miss Vilindy want well, and that she peared like she was mighty put out bout somthin. Thare was a lawyer here they sed, and he had some papers for her to sign, and talked sassy-like to the old lady, and I al'ays will bleve that kinder carried her off sooner than she'd gone hif she'd bin let alone.”

Rosalind listened sadly to this recital of the illiterate woman, wondering curiously what kind of business transaction her old aunt could have had that would have served to worry her. But she refrained from questioning the neighbor further, and here the subject was dropped.



However, it was not long until the loquacious woman commenced a new theme still more unpleasant to hear, for it was in abuse of the Underwoods; also censuring her son, Edgar, for his intimate association with this family.

“He will come to grief yet, Miss, see if he don’t, for running after them people,” she wound up, by asserting most confidently.

Rosalind felt greatly hurt and embarrassed by hearing her friends thus assailed, but remained in respectful silence while the irate woman talked. She did not approve of Mrs. Wilkerson’s inclination to gossip and say hard things of her neighbors, but what could she do to avert it? This woman had been good to her Aunt Vilinda at the time of her absence, and had watched beside her remains; hence, she could say nothing in defense of her friends.

All the day was spent by the grandniece in receiving visits of condolence from the friends and neighbors of the deceased—which is an old custom of the country—and all day she anxiously expected some of the inmates of Ivy Crown, but no one came.

The next day was the funeral, and among the lovely array of floral offerings, there came one from Ivy Crown. Later on, Judge Underwood and his mother swelled the funeral cortege that followed Miss Vilinda to the pretty little cemetery, but none of the rest of the family were present.

“Where is Millie that she does not come to me in my sorrow?” Rosalind asked herself time and time again; then she wondered if the party had returned, or had



their tour been extended over Canada, as they had, to some extent, contemplated. Had the Judge and his mother shown her more sympathy and treated her more friendly, she would have felt no hesitancy in asking, at least, if Millie had returned. But their manner had been so cold and restrained towards her that her sensitive nature was wounded too deeply for words. They had merely given her a cold hand-shake upon meeting her, and not until after they had returned from the grave did they speak to her a single syllable. Then the old lady approached the orphan, and, holding out her hand, said:

“May the Lord be with you, child, and guide your erring footsteps;” then followed the Judge’s silent hand-shake, and without a word more, or even a message from Millie, Rosalind saw the two depart.

“What can it mean?” she thought, “their cold, strange manner, and moreover, the old lady’s strange words.” It was unaccountable to her and caused her heart to ache with a bitterness she had never before experienced. For never before had friends, whom she had loved and trusted, turned coldly from her; and to think, too, that Gerald had, as it seemed, ceased to remember her, was heart-rending in the extreme. “What can it mean! oh, God, what can it mean?” was the stifled cry upon her lips as she watched the Underwood carriage roll away.

Rosalind had seen her Aunt Vilinda laid away in the shade of the great trees which grouped about the cemetery, where slumbered many of the good people of the vicinity; but though handsome monuments and countless flowers marked the resting places of those who had gone



before, she knew full well that no one of the friends of the departed had ever shed such bitter, hopeless tears as she had upon that day—tears of loneliness, grief, humiliation and despair had all fallen upon the old aunt's grave. But not alone did she weep, for many others had also wept over the grave of this just and upright woman who had, for over forty years, resided among them, beloved and honored by all. But far better had these good people reserved their tears for the beautiful orphan protegee than to have shed them over the dead, for Miss Vilinda had passed beyond the realms of sorrow, while Rosalind was just entering into its surging vortex.

The next day after the funeral, Miss Vilinda's lawyer and two other gentlemen, whom Rosalind remembered to have seen on several occasions, came to Morton Place, and the grief-stricken girl was summoned to their presence. Nerving herself for the ordeal as best she could, she entered the room where the three gentlemen awaited her. The lawyer bowed, and, advancing a few steps toward her, said:

“My name is Roberts; and this is Miss Morton, Jr., I presume. Doubtless you remember me as your late aunt's attorney?”

“Yes, I remember you, Mr. Roberts, as my aunt's legal adviser,” replied Rosalind, bowing gravely to the three gentlemen.

“Permit me, Miss Morton, to introduce you to Messrs. Crain and Crawford, bankers, with whom your late aunt was engaged in a business transaction. These gentlemen and myself came here to-day on business of a most im-



portant character, and, though we dislike to disturb you, a-hem, a-hem; so soon after your (a-hem) unfortunate loss, business is business, you know, and must be attended to."

Again Rosalind bowed, and the attorney went on:

"Do you know, Miss Morton, whether or not your late aunt left a will?"

"I really do not know, Mr. Roberts; Aunt Vilinda never confided to me anything concerning her business affairs."

"Well, Miss Morton, a-hem, a-hem, under these circumstances it is best that you should be informed at once how matters stand, so I will proceed to explain to you the present situation. Ten years ago I wrote Miss Vilinda Marmaduke Morton's will, which was made in favor of your late father, Daniel Morton. After his death, however, the old lady informed me that she wished another will written and would write me specifying a time when I should come down and attend to it for her; but tho' I have been here twice as often as necessary since, she still deferred making the new will, which was to bequeath all her worldly possessions to yourself. But since that determination was expressed by her the estate has become seriously involved, for only a short time after this she borrowed the sum of seventeen thousand dollars from these gentlemen, who represent the banking firm of Crain & Crawford, mortgaging her farm as security for the amount."

Rosalind did not reply, but the astonishment she experienced upon hearing this was fully depicted upon her countenance.



“It seems, Miss Morton, that your Aunt Vilinda was deeply in debt, and borrowed this money for the purpose of settling up with her creditors; and now, since I have given you this very necessary information, we, with your permission, will examine your aunt’s papers. You must see for yourself just how Miss Morton, senior, has left her business, therefore we wish to show you the duplicate contract which we will find among her papers; furthermore, we hope it is fully understood by you that if there has been no other arrangement made for the payment of this borrowed money, the firm of Crain & Crawford will be obliged to lay claim to the estate in liquidation of the debt.”

Rosalind had remained calm and collected throughout this recital, and not until the lawyer proclaimed this last sentence did she betray the least emotion. Like her father, she gave but little thought to money or anything pertaining to it; but this had been the home of the dear old aunt, who for forty years had seen the sun rise and set over and beyond those forest hills, and to see the old place go into the hands of strangers would grieve her as nothing else connected with finance could do; this thought caused the girl’s lips to tremble, while tears filled her eyes and involuntarily splashed down her cheeks. But bravely forcing back the rising tide of feeling, she arose, and going into the solitary living-room which had been her aunt’s, she brought out a bunch of keys and gave them to the lawyer.

“You will find that one of these keys unlocks this desk, in which Aunt Vilinda kept all her private papers,



but I cannot tell you which one," she added, taking her seat mechanically some distance from the trio.

In a very short time the nimble fingers of the energetic man of business had run over and sorted out the key, fitted it and opened the desk, then turning to Rosalind, he said:

"Sit here, near me, Miss Morton, and examine these papers with me."

And Rosalind, with all those contending emotions running riot through her heart and brain, was not spared the painful task. There were receipts, notes and old letters contained within the *escritoire* of the dead aunt, and lastly was found the duplicate copy of the mortgage, also a letter addressed to Rosalind in Miss Vilinda's handwriting, which was sealed and marked private, therefore not subject to examination. This letter was the first token the girl had found of her aunt's remembrance of herself, and it was with impatience and anxiety she awaited the departure of the trio, that she might be at liberty to read the lines she had perhaps penned to her on her dying bed. At last the search was concluded, and the lawyer arose from the desk.

"There is no will, at least none amongst these papers; neither has anything been left for the settlement of the debt; hence the only facts to be arrived at are these: your aunt has died intestate, as you are a witness, with a heavy mortgage involving her property; believe me, Miss Morton, you have my kindest sympathy," the attorney said, respectfully; then the three men took their leave.



## CHAPTER XX.

### A BITTER CUP.

AS soon as the door closed behind them, Rosalind hastened to her own room, where she might, alone and undisturbed, read the old aunt's parting words, and weep over them until her heart would to some extent, at least, be relieved of its great burden. Accordingly, on entering the room and locking the door, she tremblingly opened the letter. Two fifty-dollar bills were inclosed within; the missive bore no date, and ran as follows: "My dear and honored niece: I have been suffering greatly for the last twenty-four hours, and, thinking that possibly my end is approaching, I write this to explain to you how my business is arranged, and, also, say a word of farewell. It is impossible for me to express to you how much I am grieved that I cannot leave you with a home, if nothing else; but it can't be helped, and it is better that you should hear the truth from me, as sooner or later you will hear it from others. Yes, it is true, niece Rosalind, that Morton Place is mortgaged, and will go into the hands of the banking firm of Crain & Crawford as soon as I am laid away. Morton Place is well worth twenty-five thousand, but it is mortgaged as security for the sum of seventeen thousand, and as I see no way of paying the debt, it will have to go. There are also other debts owing. But after the selling off of my household goods, horses and cattle, if there is anything over, it is



yours. The money I inclose is all I have by me at the present; use it as you need it. It may be that I may live for years yet, but I write this to you, in case of my death. There will be no hurry for you to leave here if this should happen, as you are in possession, and to my knowledge the law allows you six months, which will give you ample time to find a good situation as a teacher, or governess in some good family. You have the friendship and interest of the Underwoods, and through the Judge's influence you will find but little trouble in getting a good place. I know, dear child, that you do not know the value of money, or do you know the misery of poverty, and I know, too, that your true heart will grieve more for the loss of your old aunt than for the property that would have been yours under other circumstances. However, you must remember that to sit down and grieve for me would be more than useless, and I would rather you would think about yourself; so take courage and be brave and determined to conquer in whatever you undertake. Learn to look after your own interests while you are alone, and remember, should Gerald Underwood wish to make you his wife, I would have no objections were I living—much less dead. You are altogether too good and pure-minded to be left in this cold world without a protector, and I know of no young man as worthy of you as he. I have no personal property of any value to leave you except my poll parrot, so I leave you the bird to have and keep forever. And now, niece Rosalind, I do hereby charge you with my dying breath, never to part with my last gift. No matter what may be the cir-



cumstances, don't part with Polly. The bird's cage is getting old; in about a year from now get a new one, and take the old one to pieces and keep it in remembrance of me. I leave my cats and dogs to Peter and Marietta; tell them to be good to my poor boys, and the dogs also. And now, niece Rosalind, if I never see you again, remember my prayer will be for you with my dying breath. I feel exhausted and can write no more. Good-bye, and may God be with you and keep you pure and holy.

“Your loving aunt,

“VILINDA MARMADU—”

Here the hand seemed to have faltered, and Rosalind knew that to have written this long letter must have cost the sufferer a great effort. After reading the lines, that the good woman had penned, through a mist of tears, the girl sat for a long time weeping unrestrainedly; but tho' the floodgates seemed to have well-nigh spent themselves, she had not experienced the relief tears had always brought her. At last she rose up, and going over to where hung her father's portrait, she knelt before it, and with face upraised and tear-swollen eyes, and hands tightly pressed against her breast, she tried to pray. But in vain, for her dry lips could not form a word or sentence, and she could only kneel there, dumbly gazing upon that loved face, that then seemed to look down upon her pityingly, as if aware of the new sorrow which had fallen upon her. It had become a habit with her since her father's death to kneel where she could look into that pictured face while saying her prayers, for it carried her back to her childhood when she had knelt at



his knee and her infant lips had lisped "Our Father." Looking into his eyes had always given her faith and hope that her petition would be heard and answered; but alas! this inspiration was also denied her. The shadows of the twilight stole in through the open casement, and deepened around her until darkness had encompassed her, but still the heart-sick girl continued to kneel there, remembering bitterly that it was the first time in all her life that she could not approach the throne of grace, could make no appeal to Him whom she had always before taken her griefs and joys, hopes and fears, and had always found the peace and comfort for which she had asked. Upon this day it seemed that the kind Father was far away from her; whither now should she turn in this hour of loneliness and gloom? From this sad revery Rosalind was aroused by a rap at her door. Upon opening it she found Marietta standing there, looking grieved and anxious.

"Come, Miss Rosalin, and go rite down to de dining-room and ete somthin; youse ben here seberl days an habent ete as much as I could put in Polly's eye," the old woman said, beseechingly.

"I am not in the least hungry, Marietta, and do not think I can eat, but, since you wish it, I will go down with you," Rosalind replied. While speaking she leaned against the door for support, and her face, upon which the lamp the negress held in her hand reflected, appeared almost ghastly in its extreme pallor.

"But you must ete somthin; jus tu think, you hab ben here gying on fore days and hasn't ete nuffin. Why,



Miss Rosalin, chile, you will die, shor as dars a world, if you don't ete," Marietta cried, in terror.

"Perhaps it would be best for me if I should," Rosalind replied, dejectedly, as she followed the old woman down the stairs.

"Oh, Miss Rosalin, don't say dat, when taint yore time yet. De good Lord put you here till he wants you up dar, and he'll call yer when he's ready widout your insisten on de matter. Dats wat ole Miss always sed, and I knos she wuz right."

"Yes, Marietta, you have said truly, but it is terrible for me to bear," the poor girl answered, as she walked up and down the supper room, apparently unconscious of the smoking viands laid out upon the white damask before her.

"I kno it am hard, honey, and am mighty sorry fo you, but it's hard fo me tu, for whar am I gwyne tu git another sich a home? but we mus only trust in de Lord; and now you must jist set down hare an ete somthin," Marietta said, placing a chair for her young mistress and proceeding to pour out a cup of fragrant tea.

Rosalind stopped in her restless walk, and seating herself at the table, turned to Marietta and asked, abruptly:

"Have you heard anything from Ivy Crown? I mean have the party all returned from Niagara?"

"Yes, Miss Rosalin, dey all cum back de day after you arriv; and jist tu think, none ob dem but de Jedge and ole Miss Underwood hab sot foot on dis place. I sed tu Peter tu-day dat it am curious like dat Miss Millie should neglect you now, bein as she always spressed sich a



liking fo you befo. And Peter said it did look right down bad, an he couldn't presactly understand it, fo de Jedge's family were not de kine ob people tu go back on any one in misfortune, yet it did look like bein dat you warent an aress dey war all treating you shabby. But hits my pinion thet dars somethin else, for tru nuff hit haint like de Underwoods tu be scornful roun anybody, septen Miss Henritta, who wuz always proud and stuck up."

Rosalind had not thought of attributing the coldness of this family to the fact that she had been left portionless, and at these words of the old servant her heart throbbed more painfully still and her lips quivered, while into the dark blue eyes there came an expression of increased agony.

Marietta, seeing the renewed suffering her words had caused, felt sorry, and endeavored to divert her mind by speaking on another subject.

"I spose you knows bout Miss Henritta gwine to git married soon to dat gentman who went wid her on de trip?" she said, interrogatively.

"No, I did not know it," was the terse reply.

"Well, dats de fac; de cook at Hivy Croun tole me all bout hit de day ole miss was berried. She sed dat ware de reson dey all comed back an didn't extind dar bisit to som oder plac, bein dat Miss Henritta was obleged to com bac to git reddy fur the weddin; she done sont way off to New York for her weddin finry, an de yong widder what went wid her to Nagra Falls is guine to be de only bridesmaid; she sont fur her tings whar Miss Hen-



ritta did. And sich grand times as dey am guine to hav at Hivy Croun neber ware herd ob in dis contry afore. Jest to think, Miss Rosalin, dey am guine clar to Girusallim on dar bridel tower. Clary, de cook, tole me all about hit, and sed, tu, dat de Jedge was awful put out case Master Gerld wouldn't go long wid dem as best man for de bridegrume; but Massa Gerld clars he won't go, an Clary seys dat de grume has done asked de Jedge tu be de best man."

Rosalind heard all that Marietta had to say without interrupting her, and tho' she had shown but little interest in this volunteer information, she was, however, conscious of a thrill of gratification upon hearing that Gerald would not make one of the party. Intuitively she felt that it was on account of herself that he had refused to go on the bridal tour. Furthermore, she tried to console herself by thinking that it was through the delicacy of his feelings that he had remained away from her at this time, thinking a visit would be an intrusion upon her grief, and that, after all her doubts, fears and misgivings, he did care for her, did sympathize with her in her loneliness and sorrow. Stimulated by this thought, new hope came into her heart, and when she rose from the table it was with more cheerfulness than she had spoken since her return that she addressed a few words to Marietta. "Poor Polly so sick," proclaimed the bird, as she passed on her way to her room and put some crackers in the cage. But Rosalind did not feel in the mood to console Polly on this evening; she had too many other things to think about, and wanted to be alone with her thoughts. Another day,



and still another, and yet no tidings from the inmates of Ivy Crown, until three weeks had passed since the funeral of Miss Vilinda, and it seemed—as far as the Underwoods were concerned—Rosalind, too, might have died and been buried without their apparent knowledge; thus far they had ignored her very existence. Her belief in the sincerity of Millie's friendship had been as firm as a rock, also in that of Gerald's affection; but it was impossible for her to continue in this childlike faith and trust, when brought to bear with these circumstances, for belief is a sentiment, and can be shaken, no matter how tenaciously the heart clings to it; and as the days went slowly by doubts of this kind strengthened and intensified, redoubling the pain at her heart and chilling it as if a hand of ice had laid hold upon it. These doubts were horrible to Rosalind; she realized that tho' her body lived, her spirit had been wounded unto death, for, after all, those are the weapons that kill—scorn, neglect and inconstancy pierce the heart with deadlier pangs than the sharpest-bladed stiletto. Thus, after these weary weeks of waiting and sickening suspense, Rosalind, one afternoon, with a feverish instinct to reach solitude and the open air, tied on a plain black hat and wandered into the wood which lay between Morton Place and Ivy Crown. She was clad in the sombre shades of mourning, which added to the transparency of her complexion, and notwithstanding the trouble and despondency that was weighing down her spirit, she had never looked lovelier. The afternoon was bright and balmy as any had been in the summer months gone by, tho' September was more than a week old, and



Rosalind thought sadly how long the time seemed since she left Niagara, and how she had waited and hoped for some message from Millie—some token of remembrance from Gerald—but had waited and hoped in vain. She walked on, scarcely heeding where her footsteps led her, and as she followed the winding paths which led through the dense forest, she was thinking deeply. Her proud nature shrank from applying to Judge Underwood for advice and aid in procuring a situation, which her aunt had suggested. She had been too greatly shocked and wounded by their neglect to approach them in any way.

“I will go away from here, where I can never hear of them again, if my heart breaks for it,” she was saying to herself, her eyes filling with unbidden tears, when looking up who should she see advancing towards her but Gerald. He had not observed her yet, she was confident, for his head was bent forward, and his eyes were fixed upon the ground, as if in deep meditation, and for one moment the wild desire to rush to one side and let him pass without knowing that she was near took possession of her; but the wish was only momentary; pride came to her rescue, and raising her head almost haughtily, she was in the act of passing him by, when he stopped immediately in front of her, blocking up the narrow pathway. Holding out his hand, he said:

“Let me offer my heartfelt sympathy, Miss Morton, I am truly grieved over your recent loss.”

Rosalind did not appear to see the proffered hand, and for some moments did not raise her eyes, which had fallen under his magnetic gaze, then summoning all her pres-



ence of mind, she looked up into his face, and was about to ask him to explain his conduct and that of his family's towards her, but, seeing his pallid countenance, the words died upon her lips.

"Good heavens! can this be he?" she asked herself, as her eyes scanned the white, haggard face and deep, sunken eyes of the man whom she had last seen in the vigor of health and strength. Seeing him thus, she forgot her words of censure, forgot all his seeming neglect and unkindness towards her, and only remembered that he, too, had suffered during the intervening weeks since she had seen him.

"I did not know that you had been ill," she said, controlling the words of anxiety and solicitude that had arisen to her lips. "What has been the matter with you?"

"I have not been ill physically, tho' I have suffered otherwise I must admit; but we will not speak of that, for there is something else I wish to say—something I might have left unsaid forever had it not have been for this accidental meeting, as I had made a solemn vow never to seek your presence again." He paused for a moment, as if overcome by emotion, and stood regarding Rosalind sternly, then continued: "But since by the merest chance we have again met, I cannot resist telling you how you have wrecked my hopes of happiness for my whole future life, let it be long or short."

Again he paused, and Rosalind, amazed beyond measure at his strange words, asked:

"What do you mean by speaking in this way to me? Your words are as mysterious as your actions towards



me have been, therefore it would be best if you would explain yourself, since I am at a loss to understand you, and equally as much so your family's neglect of me in my trouble, as I know of nothing I have done to deserve the unkindness I have received at your and their hands."

Again Gerald, while he looked into her innocent blue eyes and listened to her clear, sweet tones, was tempted to doubt that she had deceived him, and had he not remembered what his own eyes had seen he would not have accused her.

"Yes, I will explain to you every reason why I have remained away from you, and after I have done this if my actions have seemed unjust I will beg your forgiveness. As you are aware, I am a man of few words, and will say but little, tho' I intend to make myself plainly understood. Do you remember, Rosalind, the first time I ever saw you?"

Rosalind made no reply, but bent her head, and he went on:

"Perhaps not; you were at the piano, and as I rode by Morton Place you were singing 'Annie Laurie;' the dogs ran out and barked and you looked out of the window. For one moment our eyes met. Say, do you remember?"

Rosalind trembled and changed color rapidly while Gerald was speaking, for his eyes were still fixed upon her with a stern, reproachful, yet, withal, such a sorrowful expression in their hazel depths, that she was deeply moved. The shock she had received on seeing him looking so wretchedly ill had completely unnerved her. He



was waiting for her to speak, and at last she commanded her voice sufficiently to answer him.

“Yes, I remember,” she said, falteringly.

“Well, it is useless to tell you how your face and voice impressed me from that moment, and how each day of our acquaintance the interest and admiration with which you first inspired me increased, until I was forced to acknowledge within my own heart that I loved you—yes, and love you still; but God alone knows how through that love I have suffered. Not alone did I love, but I worshiped you, believing you to be the noblest and loveliest of women; alas! why did you deceive me? Why did you allow those beautiful lips to utter a falsehood?”

Rosalind heard Gerald's confession of love with the most intense emotion, while the bright color surged into her pale face; but when he ended with these strange accusations, her heart sank within her, and the beautiful roses were instantly supplanted by the snow of lilies.

“I am more than ever at a loss to comprehend your meaning. In what way have I deceived you, and when did I tell you a falsehood? Answer me explicitly,” she cried, in breathless excitement, her form trembling, her luminous eyes swimming in tears.

“I will answer your questions by putting some to you. Did you not tell me that Edgar Wilkerson was nothing to you but an acquaintance, and also give me to understand that my society was preferable to his?”

“Yes, I told you this, and I told you truly; Edgar Wilkerson is nothing to me, nor has he ever been, save as an acquaintance.”



A sad little smile rested upon Gerald's lips on hearing this assertion from Rosalind, and his voice sounded equally sad when he said:

“And yet you went to meet him secretly, at the hour of ten, the very night you left Niagara; went in Victoria Park and met Edgar in Victoria bower. Unless he was something to you, why should you have done this?”

At these words Rosalind became still more deathly white, and so great was her agitation that she seemed unable to stand, for then it was that a great conflict between love and what she deemed honor was taking place within her breast. She made no reply to this, and leaned heavily against a tree for support while these thoughts were contending within her puzzled brain, and for some moments the temptation was strong within her to explain to him how matters stood between Millie and Edgar, and how, to humor the whim of his petted sister, she had ventured out with a message for Edgar at that late hour. Then all the pride of the Morton race rose up to her aid, and she stood erect before him, magnificent in her regal attitude, her lovely face eloquent with noble sentiment.

“I will not repeat to you, Ger—Mr. Underwood—my denial of Edgar Wilkerson being anything to me, for I have told you truly; neither will I deny having met him in Victoria bower the night I left Niagara, which I admit was a most imprudent step for me to take, and sufficient cause for those who were aware of my going to look upon with disapproval. I am not at liberty to explain the circumstances of that meeting, and can only rest under the consequences, which I presume have influenced



the action of all your father's family towards me. It matters not what my regard has been for you, since you have lost confidence in me it is best that I have never expressed it to you. However, you may find out some day that I have done you no wrong and have never told you a falsehood. Within a few days I will leave Morton Place and go where you will never hear of me again; you will soon forget me—good-bye."

She held out her hand, surprised at her own courage and strength of purpose.

"God grant that I may forget the great sorrow your deception has caused me," Gerald cried, bitterly, turning from her abruptly and walking away as fast as his trembling limbs could carry him in the direction of Ivy Crown.

He was no sentimentalist, and despised the incipient gush which novel writers and love-sick youths employ in their declarations of affection; but tho' his words to Rosalind had been few and cautious and entirely devoid of art, the winged music of Homer could not have been sweeter to her ears than his voice, nor could Plato's perfect style, of whom it is said that "if the Muses spoke Greek they would have used his language," have sounded with more classic lore than did the simple words he had employed while speaking to her, for all unconsciously this girl had transferred her worship from the infinite to the finite, and now obstacle after obstacle had arisen, placing a barrier between herself and the man she worshiped higher and just as insurmountable as the pyramids of Egypt. All this shocking realism came forcibly to Rosalind as she stood where Gerald had left her looking after



his retreating form until the distance had hidden him from view, then all the calmness which she had called to her aid in this trying ordeal forsook her; again her face became livid as death, and sinking down on the ground she uttered a wild, despairing cry, in which her very soul seemed to speak, "Oh, Gerald, Gerald, can it be that you are lost to me forever?" And as this sad wail smote upon the air she crouched still lower to the earth and rested her head against the trunk of a fallen tree; and while she lay there, so miserable and heartbroken, again she tried to pray. But alas! between herself and that God in whom her father had trusted so implicitly, who had always been such a kind, loving parent from her childhood up, there arose another god, and that was Gerald Underwood. Unhappily for her she did not lose consciousness upon realizing these startling truths, but with bursting heart and every nerve drawn to its highest tension she saw those dark shadows closing in around her, and a frenzied desire to get away from everything that had been so dear to her such a short time ago took possession of her.

"If I could only die now," she moaned, burying her face in her hands and abandoning herself to her great grief.

How long she lay there she did not know, but suddenly she became aware of the approach of some one; the cat-like tread of a presence stealthily drawing near fell upon her ear in a muffled sound; mechanically raising her head, she looked around, when, oh, horrors! she saw standing there, within a few feet of her, the fearful mystery of Ivy Crown.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE FISH-POND TRAGEDY.

**B**EAUTIFUL Ivy Crown lay bathed in the glorious September sunshine, while all nature seemed smiling upon it a divine benediction. It was on the morning following the unhappy meeting between Rosalind and Gerald, and heedless of what might be befalling the beautiful niece of the dead woman, preparations for the forthcoming wedding went gayly on. Yet in spite of this outward appearance of animated interest, a cloud hung over the household, not dark and lowering, but so small as to be almost imperceptible, still its existence could not be ignored, for, true to Marietta's information, there had been bitter words between the father and eldest son regarding the bridal tour, which, agreeable to the modern society fad, would constitute a trip around the world, and Gerald had pointedly refused to make one of the party. Never before had the Judge found this adored son so resolute in opposing his will, and never before had he appeared so ungracious and taciturn towards the inmates of his ancestral home.

“Gerald has always been the most dutiful of sons, but he seems completely changed,” he complained to his mother, to whom he confided everything; and she could think of nothing that would explain his apparently undutiful behavior. Only Hetty and Mrs. Porter divined the cause of his unnatural actions, neither of whom had



mentioned it beyond themselves. But this was not all, for besides the fact of Gerald's gloom and despondency, Millie, too, was unusually quiet and dispirited. This was more noticeable to the grandmother than any one else. She had been denied the privilege of further intercourse with Rosalind by her father, to whom Henrietta had taken pains to relate the whole of the happenings at Niagara. Hence, according to the Judge's high code of moral principles, he thought it best to also put a stop to Edgar Wilkerson's visits to Ivy Crown, for he was a man who refused to tolerate the society of a fellow-man who would in any way compromise the fair name of a woman, especially one so young and inexperienced as Rosalind. Accordingly he had written Edgar, informing him that under existing circumstances, of which he had only just become cognizant, it was best that the social intercourse which had existed between he and the Underwood family should at once end. And Edgar, thinking that the Judge had by some means found out all his *affaire d'amour* with Millie, did not ask for an explanation of this sudden expulsion from his Eden, but in a state of humiliation and deepest dejection submitted to what had befallen him. Thus it was that little by little of what had been said and decided upon, Millie had grasped by the fragmentary sentences she had chanced to overhear, until she had at last fully comprehended the whole.

The suspicion that had fallen upon Rosalind through her own folly, the manner in which she was then regarded, hurt the girl's conscience, and had she not so dreaded her father's anger, she would have confessed the truth, but the



selfish desire to shield herself from the consequences of her parent's wrath kept her silent. But what grieved her more than anything else was the knowledge that Edgar would no longer be received at Ivy Crown. And while Millie pondered these things she would seek some solitary nook and weep the bitterest tears she had ever wept before. "The child is ailing," Grandmother Underwood would say, when day after day the girl grew more and more fragile, and would leave the table oftentimes without having tasted a morsel of the appetizing food spread out before her. Hence, under the impression that Millie's health was suffering, the grandame and father arranged to send her abroad with the wedding party. Such was the perplexing state of affairs at the fine old country place at that time.

On the morning as described, Henrietta and Mrs. Porter were in close consultation with their dressmakers; and while these most important items were being discussed, Judge Underwood was in the library with some early callers; though nearly ten o'clock, it was early for this household, so given to the luxurious habit of lying in bed till late hours, to have already breakfasted and commenced the routine of their everyday life. But this was owing to the fact that the bridal preparations were somewhat hurried, as the party wished to cross the Atlantic while there was smooth sailing waters. The marriage was to take place on the last day of the present month—September. The third week of October the party expected to debark upon the shore of old England, where, after a few weeks' sojourn, they would continue their



tour through France and Italy, thence to India for the purpose of wintering. Early in the spring they would visit Persia, and thus merge into the so-termed "Paradise" by the Caspian Sea. Since their tour would extend over the period of a year, it was necessary to go fully prepared for the changes of climate to which they would be subjected, hence their varied preparations. But we will leave the ladies to the busy hands of the modiste, and have a look into the library to find out what is going on there. One of the gentlemen we recognize as young Norton, whom we last saw at Niagara; the other is an elderly man, not yet known to the reader, who is no other than the father of the younger. The two men had come to see Judge Underwood on business of the greatest importance, which was nothing more or less than to advise with him in regard to the necessary legal proceedings in procuring a divorce. And while the son sat demurely silent, the father attempted to lay the case before the Judge. "It was nothing more than I expected," said the old man, in a tone more expressive of the phrase "I told you so" than of true fatherly solicitude. "No, it was nothing more than any one could have expected of that plebeian-born creature, and this is only another evidence of what eventually results from one making a mesalliance; but, to make a long story short, the infamous woman, after succeeding in cajoling my son out of five thousand dollars in cool cash, to say nothing of the misery she has caused him, has disgraced the whole family by eloping with that scalawag of an Englishman, calling himself a lord. This happened ten days ago at



Niagara Falls. And now, Judge, you have the whole story."

Old man Norton had spoken excitedly, and his words did not fail to convey the same feeling to Judge Underwood, who replied by asking in a tone expressive of the greatest astonishment, "Is it possible?" "Yes, it is only too true, and now," continued the enraged father, rising up and letting his hand fall heavily upon the table by which he was standing, "there remains a stern duty before me, which is to bring that vile creature and that dastardly rascal to justice. Can you give me instructions how to go about it?"

"I wish such a thing was as easily accomplished as talked about, Col. Norton, but at this advanced age—of rapid transportation and professional adventurers—it would be no doubt a useless undertaking to try to trace the miscreants; besides, the great amount of money it would cost employing lawyers and detectives to try to find them and recover the money the woman obtained so fraudulently would be more than the culprits are worth; hence my advice to you would be, to wash your hands of them, and do not involve your son in a newspaper scandal by making any publicity of the matter whatever. There will be no difficulty in getting a divorce, as there will be no defense in the suit which he will file against her."

This was Judge Underwood's advice to the Nortons, and there could be but little doubt of it being acted upon. Then there followed a profound silence—evidently the two were pondering the question the Judge had put before



them. And while the three men sat there silently meditative, the door was hurriedly thrown open and Fred rushed in. The boy was ghastly white, and without a word to prepare the trio for the terrible truth, he exclaimed breathlessly: "Papa, you will have to go to the fish pond at once. Edgar Wilkerson has been murdered there, and they are going to hold an inquest."

"Great heavens! what can this mean? Edgar Wilkerson murdered, and on my premises! Freddie, my son, is there not some mistake?" cried the Judge, staring down upon the lad with a strange, uncomprehending look.

Half fainting, Fred sank into a chair, and the three occupants of the library surrounded him.

"No, papa, there is no mistake," he replied, then told the story, all the details of which were dealt out unsparingly. How Peter, Miss Vilinda Morton's old servant, had gone out that morning in search of one of his dogs, who, upon coming near the inclosure of the fish pond, had seen the form of a man lying there with the bright morning sunshine falling upon it; so still did it appear, he was moved by curiosity to the spot, when, to his horror and amaze, he found it to be the dead body of Edgar Wilkerson lying there in a pool of his own blood. "I met Peter coming to tell you all about it, papa, and he sent me, while he went back to watch the body; he wants you to send for the coroner."

"Great God!" exclaimed the Judge.

"Great God!" reiterated the two visitors, simultaneously. Then they took up their hats and hurriedly left the house, while dismay and consternation was depicted



on the countenance of each, Fred following at a safe distance behind them.

An hour later the boy returned to the house to impart the startling news to the other members of the family. He had sent for them all to come to the library, and all but Millie and Gerald had assembled there, the latter having taken an early train for Louisville, and the former having gone for a walk.

“It’s just horrible to look at him, all covered with blood, and I got sick the minute I saw him,” the boy expostulated, after having told the trio of what had happened.

And while the grandmother, Hetty, and Mrs. Porter listened with blanched faces to this recital from Fred, Millie was returning slowly towards the house. She had been thinking of Rosalind and the happy summer just past, and sadly comparing those days with the present; it hardly seemed possible that a few short weeks could have wrought such a change in her feelings and in everything, and to think that Rosalind was through the folly of herself, Millie, disgraced!

While she was thinking thus, involuntarily the words of a song she had heard at an opera while in New Orleans the previous winter rose to her lips—

“ Every door is closed against her,  
Not a soul for her will mourn;  
She has fallen by the wayside,  
She —— ”

Then suddenly the notes of the song died, for passing by a window of the library she had paused for a moment on seeing the group assembled there, when her attention



was attracted by Fred's pale face and excited manner of speaking.

"If I had run upon him as old Peter did, and found that it was Edgar Wilkerson lying there so still and lifeless, I should have fainted dead away, for I know I could not have—"

The remainder of the sentence was lost in a cry; a very wail of despair smote upon the ears of those within the library, causing each to shudder with terror, and looking through the arched casement they saw a white face with staring eyes gazing towards them in hopeless agony; for one awful moment it hovered there, the next it had disappeared from sight, and Millie lay upon the grass amidst the blooming flowers only a little crumpled heap.

"Poor child; the shock of hearing this dreadful news was too much for her delicate nerves!" exclaimed the frightened grandame, as they lifted the senseless girl and bore her to her room, employing every possible artificial means to bring her back to consciousness, little dreaming, however, how blank the future would be, and how life had, on that day, lost all its charms for the spoiled child who had never known a sorrow, and whose wishes had been as law in the lovely old home. But it is only too true that "every heart knoweth its own bitterness," and now it so happened that Millie's heart was learning the sad, sad lesson, that sooner or later must come to all. And while the grandmother, Hetty and Mrs. Porter bent tenderly over the inanimate form of the heart-broken girl, an excited group of men were gathering about the beautiful fish pond belonging to Ivy Crown, upon the banks of



which the tragedy had been enacted. It was the same lovely spot where Rosalind, Millie, Gerald and Fred had spent such a happy day in the early spring, fishing; but no one would have recognized it as such in the dire confusion that now prevailed. The scene had been one of the wildest disorder ever since the news of the murder had been circulated throughout the neighborhood; every few moments the number of the spectators having increased, coming by twos and threes, until not less than sixty people now stood around the dead body of John Wilkerson's handsome son. For, true to old Peter's words, Edgar Wilkerson lay there in the full glare of the morning light, stark and cold; moreover, the weapon that had done the fearful deed had been found a short distance removed from where lay the body. This was a small, gold-hilted stiletto, with a sharp, keen blade of finest steel, a beautiful piece of workmanship of Spanish design, which dated back to the period when Spain gloried in her supremacy of wealth and luxury, and her dark-eyed women would carry beneath their black lace mantillas those pretty little instruments of death with which to avenge a wrong, either of insult or a lover's unfaithfulness. Engraven upon this, in pretty capitals, were the following initials: "From G. U. to R. M." The dagger was blood-stained even to the hilt, and had apparently been thrown where it was found after the fatal thrust. It had been passed around for examination, from one to another, ever since the finding of it; but if any of that curious and anxious throng had recognized the lettering, no token had been given to that effect. Upon the arrival of Judge Underwood on



the scene, in like manner the weapon was passed to him. "From G. U. to R. M.," he repeated slowly, and while the true significance of those neatly engraven initials dawned upon the man, who had stood face to face with the enemy upon a gory battlefield without having experienced a fear, trembled so violently that he could hardly stand; hence, with the sharp bladed instrument clutched tightly in his tremulous hand, he sat down, still repeating the initials that had caused him such perturbation of feeling.

"Those are Gerald's initials, and the others are Rosalind Morton's," was the immediate conclusion of the wise man, and, while this shocking realism came to him, he remembered, too, all the scandal that would involve the whole affair, and that Gerald's name and good repute would suffer. But, notwithstanding this knowledge, the path of duty lay before him and its stern laws must be obeyed; hence, there was no time for him to be thinking over the result of this development, for it behooved him to act at once.

"As I recognize this as having belonged to my son Gerald, I will telegraph to him to come home on the noon train. Possibly he can throw some light on this wretched affair," he explained to the coroner, who arrived about that time. Old man Wilkerson had also gone to Louisville on the early morning train, and as yet had not been apprised of the terrible catastrophe; but at this moment the conversation of the two men was put to a sudden terminus by the arrival of Mrs. Wilkerson and her two daughters on the scene, who came in the aban-



donment of their great grief, which was pitiful to behold, for while the sisters bemoaned the fate of their idolized brother with heartrending cries, the mother, between abusive language and hysterical shrieks, became so exhausted that she fell into a dead swoon, and while in this state of unconsciousness was placed in a carriage and driven to her home, the daughters going also. Thus they were removed by main force from the harrowing spectacle. We will pass as briefly as possible over this sad and mysterious happening; suffice it to say that Gerald received the startling telegram at the hotel where he had stopped for the day, or perhaps a week, for, though he had plead important business as an excuse for going to the city that morning, nothing had taken him but the weariness and despondency which oppressed him like a weight of iron, and made him long to get away from scenes and surroundings that served to remind him of the idealistic fancies in which he had been indulging during the past summer; he felt extremely irritated that he could not cast these remembrances from him forever, and think of Rosalind as being unworthy of even his pity; but he found it impossible to do this, for her image was constantly before him, and in his troubled slumber the night before he had seen the delicate black-robed figure standing near him as she had stood in the woods, and had heard her clear, rich voice saying to him, "Some day you may find out that I have never told you a falsehood."

He thought bitterly of how he had allowed himself to become so ensnared, and realized how it had been with men who had died for women they had loved. But



of all the wounds he had received, none were half so painful as the humiliating sense that he held no place in this woman's heart, and that she only encouraged him in the belief that she was not indifferent to him for the sake of piquing Edgar Wilkerson or gratifying her own vanity.

While he recalled this his veins thrilled and his proud blood burned—to think he had been made a toy to be played with at will by the one woman who in her seeming innocence and purity had impressed him as being angelic. With all these contending emotions running riot in his brain Gerald had left Ivy Crown that morning, little dreaming, however, that he would be summoned home to be present at the inquest of his supposed rival. There were no details, only the bare fact that “Edgar Wilkerson had been murdered; come at once, you are needed at the inquest.” This had been signed by his father.

This news gave him a shock—a chilliness; a vague terror took possession of him as the sense of what he read gradually grew more and more distinct. A sudden remembrance of the bitterness he had been cherishing in his heart towards Edgar since their last evening at Niagara smote him, and a sorrow quite sincere moved him compassionately. Then, too, a painful duty awaited him, for in five minutes time after receiving the message there came another telling him to find the father of the dead man and impart to him the sad tidings. He could not tell him outright of what had befallen his son, but he endeavored to prepare him for the terrible trouble that awaited him by telling him that some serious accident had happened to Edgar and that both he and himself had been telegraphed for.



Judge Underwood was at the station to meet the two, and broke the news to the father as gently as possible as they proceeded to the scene of the fearful tragedy.

It would be useless to attempt to describe the grief of the doting parent upon hearing the details of this untimely death.

“Don’t tell me that my Edgar’s ded, Jedge, hit’s more than I ken bare!” he cried, in a tone of consternation, then broke into a storm of grief.

It was a sad sight that met the gaze of Gerald and the stricken father, and one that would have caused the hardest heart to throb with pity, while their eyes gazed upon the handsome, boyish face, with its wide open, sightless eyes, to which the noonday sun, piercing through the dark branches of the old oaks, lent a mocking brilliancy. The clustering locks of dark hair were matted with blood, and the red stains were also upon his hands and face. There was every evidence of a death struggle, for his clothes, too, were covered with the same crimson gore.

Judge Underwood did not speak of the blood-stained dagger to Gerald, for he did not want him to be prepared for this development. Knowing the chivalrous nature of his son, he feared that, in this case, should he have time to think, he would invent some means of protecting Rosalind through sacrificing himself; hence, when upon their arrival at the fish pond, where the preliminaries were being arranged preparatory to holding the inquest, the stiletto was placed in the hands of the young man, and the question, “if he could identify it,” was put to him; had he been asked to sign his own death warrant he could



have done so more willingly and readily than to have told what he knew of the fateful little instrument. With his brain whirling as of one in delirium, he stood there holding the finely-wrought weapon in his hand, and for some time seeming forgetful of the fact that a matter of great importance was awaiting his reply. How intensely still everything had grown as he stood there pondering within his own mind the question; and the answer, what should it be? Over nature, too, had fallen that solemn hush, for not a branch quivered, no bird's happy voice broke upon the impressive silence. The water lilies reclined upon the surface of the pond motionless as death; they, too, seemed listening for him to speak the words that would link the name of the beautiful Rosalind with that of a murderess. "No, he could not do this; rather would he suffer any penalty himself than to be instrumental in consigning this girl to such a fate," he told himself, as he gazed dumbly about him. As one in a dream he walked a few paces, then paused suddenly, for he stood directly over the body of Edgar Wilkerson. Again he viewed the sickening spectacle, and again he shuddered with horror; then, mastering his great emotion, he said:

"I am under oath, gentlemen, and am therefore obliged to confess that this weapon was formerly mine; furthermore upon the subject I refuse to speak, hence you may consider me your prisoner."

At this Judge Underwood was furious, and after giving vent to his indignation in the strongest terms that could have possibly been employed, he addressed himself to the jury:



“For heaven’s sake, gentlemen, do not listen to such wild and quixotic ideas as Gerald has expressed, for in this case he has allowed his gallantry to rule his better judgment and high sense of justice. The present owner of the instrument of death is Rosalind Morton!”

Gerald started towards his father menancingly as if he would stay the words on his lips, but before he could reach him the fatal words were uttered:

“I could have never believed you guilty of such an act, father, and were it any one but you I would call it cowardly; but I cannot so far forget myself. You should remember, however, that I am no longer a minor, and as a number of years have passed since I reached my majority, I am fully capable of attending to my own affairs.”

Then, turning to the jurymen, he repeated.

“Gentlemen, I insist upon being made responsible for the deed this dagger has done—at least until the true murderer has been apprehended.”

“He is mad; do not heed his wild words, but do your duty, gentlemen; the mandates of the law must be obeyed!” cried the Judge, excitedly, regardless of the fact that the court had been called to order.

At last quiet was restored, and the men of law proceeded to business. It was almost three o’clock when the inquest was over, the jury having rendered a verdict that Edgar Wilkerson had come to his death by the wound of a knife, and though the murder was still wrapt in mystery, the circumstance of Rosalind Morton being the present owner of the instrument of death pointed to her as the assassin.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### ACCUSED.

WHEN Rosalind returned to consciousness, after her encounter with the fearful mystery in the woods, she found Peter and Marietta engaged in applying restoratives while she lay on a couch in the familiar room which had been her aunt Vilinda's.

"Where am I, and what has happened?" she asked, looking nervously from one to the other of the faithful old servants.

"Rite here wid yore old Marietta, honey; and now, since de Lord hab bin so good tu fotch yu back tu dis wold whin we thout you wus clean ded, yu mus let Peter go fetch yu a cup ob tea, an den yu drink hit while it am biling hot."

Rosalind did not reply, and when Peter brought the tea, and Marietta held a saucerful to her lips, tried to swallow a few mouthfuls, still looking strange and bewildered.

"Take it away," she cried, pushing the steaming beverage from her, and sitting up. "I do not want to eat or drink anything ever again. Why do you bring me food or drink to sustain life when I only want to die and be at rest?"

The servants withdrew to another part of the room and seemed at a loss what to do or say to console their young mistress.



“Alone and forsaken; what a miserable fate,” she murmured, almost inaudibly.

“What du yu suppose happened tu her in de woods, Peter, dat made her faint?” asked Marietta soto-voce, while the two listened to her sad lamentations.

“Hits my pinion dat dem folks at Ivy Crown had somthin to do wid hit, but de Lord only knows, an we colored folks habent any bizness trying fo to fine out; still hit am sorrowfying to us to see de poor young Missee neglected like and scorned down by de rich folks. Hits a wonder dat ole Missee ken res esy in her grave under sich rassi-fying circumstances.”

“Dont, Peter, dont tempt de ded out ob der graves,” said Marietta, in alarm, “fur hits mighty well dat ole Miss am spared de knowledge ob what’s gying on in dis wiked worl, an I dont want her tu hab tu riz out ob dat grave till the resumrection.”

While this little side talk was going on between Peter and Marietta, Rosalind was, one by one, recalling the events of the afternoon, and as they floated back to her, at first vaguely, then clearly and distinctly defined themselves, the true realism of what had occurred came to her with overpowering force and meaning; Gerald’s white, haggard face and sorrowful eyes arose before her, while again she heard his grave, sweet tones falling upon her ear in words of accusation, and she remembered, too, how she had sunk down and cried out in the bitterness of her spirit, and in answer to that cry of an overladen soul there had come the fearful *bete noire*—the horrible thing that seemed to have made of her a prey upon which to



feast its cavernous eyes and cast the spell of its ominous presence; and again the puzzling question as to what it could be was put before her. She had heard Irish legends of the dreaded Bashee, which always appeared to warn them of danger and death, and she asked herself if this hideous creature had been sent to warn her of the new sorrows and misfortunes that had and were still to befall her? This was as far back as she could remember. She did not know how she had ever reached Morton Place, for the last of her recollection the uncanny mystery was slowly but surely approaching her.

Beckoning Marietta to her, she asked, "Who found me in the woods and brought me home?"

"Bless yore soul, Miss Rosalin, it ware me an Peter; nobody else. You see hit ware way arter dark an you hadn't cum hom frum yer walk, an I says to Peter dat him an me had better go fine yo, an so we sot out in our serch; an fore de Lord, chile, we ware skeered haf tu def when we got in dem hanted woods, fur we herd dat dreadful cry, twix a panter an a humen bein, an we made shore de ting had ete you alive or clawd out yore ise wid dem long nails. It am a ferful ting, Miss Rosalin, fur sich a cus to hang ober eny neighborhood, an I want you to tell yore ole Marietta hif dat skeery ting took arter yo in dem dark woods?"

"I saw something, Marietta, something horrible to look upon, but when it appeared to me I believe I screamed, and then I lost consciousness. But tell me, Marietta, have you ever seen it, and do you know what it is?"

"No, Miss Rosalin, tank de Lord, I neber hab sot ise



on hit mysef, but I'se hern hit hollar, an dat was enuff fur me. But Peter has seed hit mor dan once, and he'll tell yo all about 'hit. Com ober here, Peter, an tell Miss Rosalin bout dat ugly creeter dat gose round skeerifying de people out ob dar wits in dis locinity."

At this Peter came forward, holding his hat in his hand in his usual deferential manner, and said:

"Well, Miss Rosalin, sence yo hab seen dis muraculus gobhoblin, hit am usless fur me tu attemp a perscription, so I will only tell yo how long hit has been disinfectin dis naborhood, fur anybody dat has eber seed it and am acquainted wid hits noculating phisologamy dont want tu hab eny more prescriptions ob hit. I am nuffin but a ole cullerd man, Miss Rosalin, but I dont make a practice ob tellin lies, an hits de God's truf dat dat ting hab ben disinfectin dis naborhood fur about twenty yers, and nobody can fine out what hit am and who hit belongs tu. Ob course, Miss Rosalin, hit dont become me to hab anyting tu say bout white foks affars, but hit am rashionable to suppos dat I ken spress my opinion to my ole Misses' nece, and I tell you dat dar's more knowin about dat craibolical obnufatus at Hivy Croun den eny ob dem will remit; but hit will all come out some day, fur de Bible says dat ebery ting hidden shall be repeled, and dat am bound to repeal hitself some time."

"I am much obliged, Uncle Peter, and now I believe I will go to my room," Rosalind said, thus kindly dismissing the old man. Marietta accompanied her and begged that she might assist her in undressing, for the sympathizing old negress wanted to linger as long as possible



near the lonely girl on this night in particular, for there was an expression on her face that she could not understand, and some way she feared to trust her alone.

“No, you need not remain up any longer on my account, Marietta; I have some letters to write, and will sit up for some time yet,” she said upon being thus importuned by the servant to let her stay with her awhile.

After Marietta had withdrawn, Rosalind again gave herself up to thinking over the past miserable days, and, feeling assured that all hope for the future was forever extinguished, she tried to decide upon some immediate course to pursue. Full well she knew she could not remain there, for life at Morton Place had grown intolerable since she had heard from Gerald’s own lips how she was regarded by himself and family. And it was all through her friendship for Millie that she had placed herself in a position which would no longer warrant her in expecting friendship and sympathy from those proud people; and were Millie even to confess that she had brought about this scandal in which Rosalind’s name was so deeply involved, it was doubtful if they would be more tolerant of her than they now were, as they would blame her for aiding Millie in taking such a step. And while those thoughts filled her brain, she sat until far into the night telling herself sadly that nothing else remained for her but go away where she would never hear of Gerald again, and try and forget the happy months that had drifted so serenely away since she had known him. Such joys had been too infinite to be lasting, and were not for her. No! she had held the golden bowl for the last time



to her lips and drank of the luscious draughts. Now, alas! the bowl was broken and the fragments lay scattered about her; happiness had crowned her life for a little while, and then, with stealthy steps, had stolen away. Knowing that it was impossible to sleep, Rosalind remained up the greatest portion of the night, and, with a view of whiling away the hours, commenced the task of packing her trunk, having fully made up her mind to leave Morton Place the following day. While thus engaged, again the past happy months were brought vividly before her; for, while one by one of the pretty dresses—with which her Aunt Vilinda had so generously supplied her—were taken down and folded, each one brought about memories of Niagara and Gerald. The bunch of flowers she had worn upon the last evening of her stay at the falls still nestled among the laces of her dress; Gerald had sent them to her, and how happy she had been when she fastened them there. They had been so fresh and beautiful then, but now were dry and withered.

“Like my hopes, they, too, are faded and dead,” she thought, while she pressed these mementos of the sweet past to her lips and watered them with her tears.

She then gathered together everything, from the tiniest bit of paper to the lovely little relics that Gerald had purchased from the Indian squaws, whom they had encountered in Prospect Park, whither they had come to sell their wares, and as this task was in process her hands had touched each little token reverently. Only one thing was missing to make the number of souvenirs complete, and that was not to be found; and while she searched



diligently for it, she recalled the evening that Gerald had presented it to her and also the history he had given her of it. It was a small instrument that had been found by him in a curiosity store in the city of Mexico and dated back a century or more. Tradition said that this stiletto had belonged to a Spanish countess, who had, in a fit of jealous rage, slain her lover with it. While Rosalind recalled the little story, memory carried her back to that happy afternoon. She was at Ivy Crown, the day was bright and glorious, and everything was as merry as marriage bells. It was only a few days prior to their going to Niagara, and they were all busy making preparations for the fete, when it so happened that Gerald and herself were alone together, and he had said to her:

“Since you are a lover of antiquity, Miss Morton, this relic may be of interest to you, but do not let it serve you the same purpose that it did its former owner,” he had added, laughingly, after reciting to her its history.

But not for long did this sweet forgetfulness linger with Rosalind, for too closely were those events interwoven with the present, hence only sufficed to contrast more painfully with what had since fallen upon her. Then a feeling of still more utter desolation took possession of her, and caused her to bitterly lament over the hard fate that had overtaken her.

“After all, what does it matter whether I find the gift or not? The past is only a heap of withered roses that lie dead at my feet; nothing could bring them back to life again, for all their beauty and fragrance have been crushed out of them. Then why should my heart cling



to these sweet remembrances since they have all been replaced by stern and terrible realities which confront me on every side? If I could only pray."

Kneeling down beside her bed, she stretched out her arms towards her father's portrait imploringly, and again tried to approach the throne of grace; but, alas! no words came to the white lips, which seemed as powerless of speech as if she were dumb; then she buried her face in the pillows and wept herself to sleep. When daylight streamed into the open casement it fell upon the pallid face of the lonely girl, asleep with her head resting against her bed. At the first gray streaks of the dawn her weary eyes had closed through sheer exhaustion.

It was after eight o'clock when Marietta went up to call her young mistress to breakfast and found her thus. The beautiful brown hair had become unbound and fell about her face like a halo of glory; one pretty white hand still lay caressingly upon the little mementos beside her, and the other rested beneath her cheek; her face was almost as colorless as the pillows upon which it reposed.

"Pore chile; pore little forsaken lamb! What a pity de good old aunt had tu lebe her in dis miserable wold," mused the negress while she gazed down, sorrowfully, upon the white, sad face; then gently smoothing the golden brown tresses, she called: "Miss Rosalinn, Miss Rosalin; wake up, honey, an let yore ole Marietta bring yu a bite ob breakfas, an den put yu tu bed nicely. Com, precios lamb, git up; dis floor am too hard for yore tender flesh."

Partly raising herself, Rosalind asked: "Why did you



waken me, Marietta? I was dreaming of papa; we were at the parsonage together, and I was so happy."

If Gerald could have only heard those softly spoken words, and looked into her innocent eyes, he could have never again doubted her purity, no matter what others would choose to think of her. But at that moment he was cursing his own folly and calling himself a weak fool for having again believed in a woman, and while the train which was bearing him to Louisville moved swiftly onward his thoughts kept pace with its rapid motion. But we will return to Rosalind.

"You are right for waking me, Marietta," she said, as her eyes fell upon the little trinkets on the floor beside her. "I should have been up an hour ago."

She remembered how she had resolved upon this day to leave Morton Place forever, and now the sun was high in the heavens, and she had slept on, heedless of the time that was passing.

"I cannot start before noon now, for I must prepare Marietta and Peter for my going," she soliloquized, as she went down to the diningroom. When she had eaten sparingly of the good breakfast the servant had placed before her, she said:

"I am grieved to leave you and Peter, Marietta, for you are in truth the only ones in the world who care for me; but I have fully determined on going away to-day, and thought I might as well tell you now, but I want you to remember that I shall always think of you and Peter with the greatest gratitude, and will write and let you know how I am getting along."



Rosalind tried to speak cheerfully, but in spite of her effort to do so her voice faltered, and by the time she had finished the hot tears were coursing down her cheeks.

Marietta could not restrain her grief upon hearing this, and, sitting down near Rosalind, she raised her apron to her eyes and cried aloud, while every now and then, between deep sobs and sorrowful wails, she would reiterate Rosalind's words, "Guine away—Miss Rosalin's guine away! a-n I a-n P-e-t-e-r b-e l e-f a-l a-l-o-n." Then, falling on her knees beside Rosalind, she implored that she might go with her. "I'd work fur yo, Miss Rosalin, an not be on yore hands if yo will let me go," she said beseechingly.

And Rosalind, deeply moved by this devotion, at last found words to reply.

"I would gladly take you and Peter with me, Marietta, but it would not be right to leave the old place without notifying the present owners of it; and Peter has, to my own knowledge, obligated himself to remain here for the rest of the year."

Thus reasoning, Rosalind soon convinced Marietta how impossible it was for she and Peter to go away at that time.

At half-past three a train would be going south, and at that hour Rosalind would leave Morton Place. All the forenoon she busied herself in getting everything in readiness, until the time had slipped away much quicker than she had anticipated, and it was three o'clock, but still Peter had not come to convey herself and baggage to the depot. She had dressed for her journey, and was



waiting impatiently for the old negro's return, but it seemed that, after all, she would not get off at the time appointed.

Early that morning Peter had gone out to look for one of his dogs, and up to this hour had not returned.

"I'se mighty onesy bout him, Miss Rosalin; he didn't ete noofin hardly fore he went, an sed he'd be back tu breakfast," explained Marietta, as the two stood watching for his return.

Half-past three, and still there were no signs of his coming; and Rosalind knowing that the time was up (as the train was then due at Livingston station) laid aside her hat and sat down by one of the parlor windows.

"I will go on the night train," she thought, while her eyes wandered over those woods where she had last seen Gerald. "I am taking another look, which will be the last one I hope," she murmured, as she gazed out again upon that spot, so fraught with sweet and bitter remembrances. Again she recalled the morning Millie, Gerald and she had traversed the path that led through those woods on their way to the fish pond—the blue of the sky, the laughing, dancing sunlight that seemed to reflect their joyous spirits, Gerald's grave, sweet smiles and Millie's laughing face—all that had happened on that day floated back to her mental vision, and for a little while she was forgetful of her sorrow. Then the whole scene faded, the golden flecks of sunlight vanished, and the vague mist in the distance seemed to concentrate and descend about her like an impenetrable shroud, shuddering as if a chill had seized her, she arose from the window and went over to



where sat Polly's cage. "Poor Polly," she said, soothingly, while she caressed the bird and endeavored to check her shrill laughter. But at this moment she was startled by hearing Marietta's voice in the hall. She was speaking excitedly; then the door was thrown open, and two men entered, followed by both the old servants.

"I tole dem not to com in till I renounced dem, Miss Rosalin, but dey wodn't listen to me," proclaimed Marietta, indignantly.

Rosalind's eyes raised swiftly upon hearing this, and became fixed interrogatively upon the intruders; but before she could utter a word one of the men approached her and asked:

"Is this Miss Morton?"

The girl bowed gravely, and the stranger continued:

"As we have some important business to transact with you, it would be well if you would dismiss your servants."

Again Rosalind bowed, and turning to Marietta, said:

"You can go now and give Uncle Peter his dinner; if I need you I will call you."

As soon as the two were fairly out of the room the stranger drew from his coat pocket a small parcel, and unfolding it, held it towards Rosalind.

"Can you identify this?" he asked, a little contemptuous smile playing about his cynical lips.

"Oh, yes! it is mine; I could not find it anywhere," she replied, almost joyfully, taking the little instrument from the man's hand; then seeing the blood stains upon it, she grew pale as death, while a sickening faintness took possession of her.



"I am an officer of the law, Miss Morton, and have a warrant for the arrest of the owner of this stiletto on the charge of the murder of Edgar Wilkerson."

While this awful denouncement fell upon Rosalind's ears she stood as one nailed to the floor, her eyes fixed upon the sheriff with a look of horrified perplexity, as if unable to comprehend the full meaning of his words. Then as the realism of it all dawned slowly to her, whiter and whiter grew her face, and motionless as death became her form, which, had it been carved from Parian marble, could not have appeared more statuesque. Edgar Wilkerson had been murdered—this much she understood; furthermore what was it?

The shock seemed to have paralyzed her every sense, or else she could find no words to express the dismay and horror that was contending within her breast.

"Accused of a crime, and the victim, too, of circumstantial evidence, that seemed to have woven about her an intangible net, while all the web of inexplicable fatality had fallen about her, drawing her down to the very depths of humiliation and despair."

All these thoughts rushed madly through her brain while standing there face to face with the stern officer of the law. And she asked herself: "What were all the rest of her sorrows compared to this?"

Only a few minutes had passed since the two officers had found their way into Rosalind's presence, yet it seemed hours, yea, years, to her.

Then again footsteps were heard coming in that direction; again the door was thrown open unceremoniously,



and John Wilkerson rushed into their midst, his face haggard and aged, his mouth twitching convulsively. Without a word of preface he cried out: "I say, officer, don't arrest that gal; I won't let hit be done if hit costs me my farm, and I com here to put a stop to hit, for I tell you that gal never had anything more to do with the murder of my Edgar than a new-born baby. Make out your bond, sir, and I'll sign hit, no matter how much hit calls fur."

Rosalind heard and understood the words of this honest man, and for an instant her heart thrilled with gratitude—he, the father of the murdered young man, ignorant tho' he was, did not believe her guilty. This much was clear to her. Then a misty cloud floated before her, and she seemed to be sinking through immeasurable darkness and space. Suddenly a shriek rang through the house, followed by another and another, and then the girl fell to the floor in a dead faint.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE SHADOWS OF THE DARK VALLEY.

“**P**OOOR lamb, poor lamb; at las dey hav crusefied her tu death,” cried Marietta, who was stationed just outside of the door, and had ran in the moment she heard Rosalind fall. And, indeed, nothing could have appeared more death-like than the swoon in which she lay, her fair hands clasped over her breast as if with her last breath she had supplicated at the throne of mercy and peace. But youth and healthful vitality prevailed, and she at last awoke to life, but not to consciousness; happily for her, she was delirious. After that there were weeks that all the future were to her a blank, for she lay ill unto death, burning with fever, talking rapidly, wildly and incoherently at times, and again babbling in soft childish prattle, her fevered imagination taking her back to her childhood home, and laughing joyously while she frolicked gleefully with her father and reveled in their many sports.

At these times her face would light up with an expression of perfect happiness, and the sweet innocent eyes would sparkle with merriment. But again the whole scene would seem to undergo a rapid transformation, for into those lovely orbs would come a wild, frightened expression, and from the parched lips the most frenzied cries would issue, which would die down into low sobbing sounds pitiful to hear. And at these partly lucid mo-



ments great scalding tears would roll down her fever-flushed cheeks, and she would call in heartbroken tones to her dead father, begging and pleading that he would come back to her, if only for a little while, and let her lay her aching head upon his breast.

For two weeks she raved continuously, the fever not abating in the least, and while the death angel hovered again over the deserted old home of Morton Place, old lady Underwood, in the sympathy of her kind motherly heart, watched almost nightly beside the forsaken orphan, oftentimes pressing her cool hands to the fevered brow, thus soothing her frantic raving into quiet by her gentle touch. Gerald would accompany his grandmother, and while he waited within the next room and listened to her, his heart ached as it had never ached before, and he realized more fully than ever how dear she was to him, and that he would have freely given up his own life to have saved her from the pangs she had suffered.

Every one thought she would die, the doctor included; but her hitherto superb unbroken health saved her life, and she was brought back from the very grave. Slowly the fever subsided and consciousness returned, and pale and spent, weak as an infant, white as a snowflake, and ethereal as a dream, she looked out one bright September day and saw the woods all flooded with sunshine, and heard the birds singing as blithely as if pain and sorrow had never visited the earth.

They would not let her talk, and the doctor said she must sleep, and administered a soothing potion immediately, upon finding her conscious, which brought about a



peaceful, restful slumber, and while the gentle breezes of Somnus waft her into happy forgetfulness, we will leave her and go back to other scenes, and recount some important happenings since the day of the fish-pond tragedy.

Not alone had Morton Place been the scene of sorrow and suffering in the past weeks, for at the Wilkerson home there was gloom and wretchedness that bordered on despair. Edgar had been their pride and joy, and they all bemoaned his loss piteously. And while this grief reigned over John Wilkerson's household the cloud that for weeks had hung over Ivy Crown had deepened and darkened and grown into immense proportions, for Millie, the light and joy of that grand old home, was still ailing. From the day that Edgar Wilkerson had been found murdered she had been as one in a dream, wandering about the house in a listless, aimless way, or seeking some lonely spot to give vent to her pent-up sorrow in miserable, hopeless weeping. Never had her laugh sounded through the house nor a song burst from her lips since that terrible day. The family had all become alarmed, and thereby called in their physician, who had pronounced her case nothing more serious than nervous debility, brought on from the shock she had doubtless sustained by the sad happenings of the neighborhood, at the same time prescribing a good tonic and change of scene as the most beneficial remedy to restore her to her normal state. Hence, in consideration of this, they all looked forward to her forthcoming sea voyage with great hopefulness for her recovery. Gerald, too, had become more



and more depressed, and had spent all his time in trying to find some new clue to the mysterious murder. Upon arriving on the scene the day the inquest was held he had immediately telegraphed back to Louisville, asking for the services of their best detective; accordingly, late in the afternoon of the same day one had come down. The inquest was over and the body had been removed, and only he and Gerald remained where the deed had been perpetrated. After getting a detailed account of the whole proceedings the detective wandered up and down the banks of the water, and Gerald saw him bend forward and pick up something, and after carefully examining it put it in his pocket; then turning to him, he said:

“I have found a clue which I am pretty certain will serve me in apprehending the true murderer.”

“I trust you may be successful in your attempt; remember, if you are, I will add several hundred to the handsome sum John Wilkerson will give you.”

Then the detective questioned him concerning Rosalind.

“Was Miss Morton, the supposed murderess, a country girl who dressed plainly, or was she refined and lady-like in appearance,” he asked, and Gerald replied:

“Miss Morton is apparently one of the most refined young ladies I have ever met, unexceptionable in both dress and manner.”

“Then you can rest assured suspicion has fallen on the wrong party,” said the detective, without further explanation.

It had been utterly impossible for Gerald to analyze his



own belief as regarded the murder of Edgar Wilkerson, for tho' the surrounding circumstances were strong proof of Rosalind's guilt, he could not bring himself to look upon her as a murderess. No, while she had even acted a deceptive part towards himself and her actions had bespoken intrigue of the deepest dye, he could not believe altogether in her unworthiness, and in his heart of hearts he still enshrined her in her vestal robes of purity and chastity, and believed that within the temple of her soul the altar fire still burned brightly. He had never fully realized the unlimitable extent of his feelings for this seemingly spirituelle girl until he bore witness to the multiplicity of misfortunes that beset her on every side; and now he knew that he not only loved her with all the strength of his manhood, but with the platonic and spiritualized affection which Petrarch had bestowed upon his Laura.

And while these contending emotions had filled the mind of Gerald and the death angel spread his wings over the couch of Rosalind, exaggerated rumors flew from house to house of how Edgar Wilkerson had been her lover; how their midnight meetings had been held sub-rosa, both at Niagara and in the neighborhood where the tragedy had occurred, and, lastly, how she had met him at the fish pond, and, in a fit of jealous rage, thrust the little dagger through his heart. For once the gossips of that locality had enough to talk about; nor did they wait to analyze the truth of these accounts; instead, they listened hungrily, eagerly devouring every morsel of scandal which added to the sensation, or fuel to the flames that



were all consuming in their intensity of heat. And not only were these rumors listened to and repeated, but they were prefaced and stereotyped until the circumstances pertaining to the murder of Edgar Wilkerson would have filled columns of newspapers; and had it not been for Gerald's timely interference in suppressing such, doubtless the name of the beautiful orphan would have been broadcast throughout the land; for, of all things, there is nothing more pitiless than the handling of a fair woman's name. Envy and malice walk hand in hand and trample down with merciless vindictiveness those whom they would crush with no more conscientious scruples as regards the consequences of their work than a mower who sweeps his scythe over a bed of fresh, sweet violets. Gerald knew all this, and heard with withering scorn all these unfounded and imaginary reports; for he was well enough acquainted with the world to know that Rosalind's beauty augmented condemnation—especially with her own sex—and his reverence and honor knew no bounds when his grandmother refused to believe her guilty, and spent so much of her time nursing her back to life. Truly, she was a noble old woman, for her heart turned to the sufferer and her hand administered true charity. Since she had sat at Rosalind's bedside and heard her sorrowful ravings, all her womanly tenderness had been touched, for the pure, sweet nature of the girl had revealed itself clearly to her, while she wandered back to childhood and held converse with her sainted father; and it mattered not what evidence there were against her, henceforth she would believe her innocent. Nor had Gerald ever so



much honored and liked John Wilkerson as he had done since he acted such a noble part towards Rosalind, and he felt ashamed when he compared his father's manner of treating the matter with that of the ignorant old farmer. It had been a surprise to everybody to see how quickly the father of the dead man had defended the name of Rosalind, and how he had ridden rapidly to Morton Place, notwithstanding his terrible grief, to prevent her from being arrested.

“Hit’s an outrage to think of such a thing as charging that angel of a gal with a crime, and hit shan’t be did, gentlemen, if hit costs me my farm to put a stop to hit,” he had proclaimed, excitedly, as he mounted his horse and followed the officers. Accordingly, a bond had been signed by him for her appearance before the court two weeks subsequent to the murder; but at the time appointed, Rosalind lay in the valley and shadow of death, hence there had been no trial; and since John Wilkerson refused to prosecute her, and the State had not, it was thought that nothing would come of it after all—nothing but a disgraced name and a broken heart. But such as that was not weighed in the balance, and by the world considered as naught.

Meanwhile, the time of Henrietta’s wedding was at hand, for, in spite of all these sad happenings, preparations for this occasion had gone on unceasingly, and the evening upon which the nuptials were to be celebrated had arrived. The large handsome rooms were flooded with light, and flowers in all their luxuriant beauty were blooming in every available nook and corner. The guests



were not very numerous, composing only the most intimate friends of the family, Henrietta having changed her mind as regarded the grand wedding she had at first planned and the many cards of invitation she had intended to send out, Millie's failing health had caused the number to be limited to a great extent, and the marriage was to be comparatively a quiet one. Upon that evening, outwardly, everything presented that even repose characteristic of well-ordered households, but all were more or less perturbed in spirit, for Millie had refused to be present at the ceremony.

"I can not go down, Hetty, and there is no use insisting on me doing so, for I won't," she had declared emphatically, pushing aside the beautiful dress of cream silk and illusion, which had been made for the occasion.

"It is very silly of you to mope yourself to death as you are doing; unless you are too ill to make your appearance this evening, I do not know what other excuse could be offered for your absence from the parlor," Henrietta said, tartly; and Millie had answered wearily, "It makes no difference to me what you say or what they think."

Nothing attracted or interested the unhappy girl at that time, not even the regal beauty of the elder sister while she stood there beside her with the crimson light of the sunset stealing in at the open casement and falling about her; surely handsome Miss Underwood had never appeared so charming before. Her dark Southern eyes and languid, high-bred grace, in fact her every charm, were brought out to the best possible advantage, by the mag-



nificent bridal toilette of trailing white satin, with its delicate laces and the gleaming diamonds which adorned her. No grand old picture could have looked more superbly queenly, not even a Titian or a Murillo, than did Hetty on her bridal eve.

Then came Mrs. Porter, who would have added her solicitations in trying to induce Millie to go down, had it not been for a certain haughtiness in the girl's bearing towards her. She, too, dressed exactly as the bride, nothing excepted but the veil and wreath of orange blossoms, looked lovely as a dream. But Millie did not appear the least enthused, and spoke no word of praise or comment. Then came Nellie and Nettie, both in ravishing toilettes, to beg of Millie to go down, but something in the pale, pathetic face of their old friend stayed the words on their lips. They had all dressed early, as the marriage ceremony was to be said at nine o'clock, and the party to leave on the midnight train, Millie accompanying them; but this thought did not interest her any more than other things. Day by day her condition had become more and more alarming, and the anxious father and grandmother looked eagerly forward to the voyage, trusting that the change would do for her what medical skill had failed. There was only one at Ivy Crown who guessed the cause of her indisposition, and that was the pretty widow, and tho' she appeared to ignore entire knowledge of the affair, and never by look or word hinted it to Millie, she secretly feared that the remorse of conscience that was wearing upon the delicate girl would cause her to weaken and confess all to her father. This



would prove disastrous to the widow, who had made up her mind that should she fail to again bring Gerald to her feet, she would marry the Judge, and so prejudice him against his son as to cause him to lose his inheritance; such would be her revenge. She knew, too, that it was partly through her machinations that suspicion had fallen upon Rosalind, and she also knew by Gerald's white, resolute face that he would leave no stone unturned which would serve to prove this girl's innocence. All this passes through the wily woman's brain again and again while the festive preparations are in progress, and though she would fain put away dull thoughts on this occasion, they came to her more forcibly still while she stood there in the presence of the sorrowing girl. Several hours later the rooms below presented a gay scene. The marriage was over, and old lady Underwood, in soft gray silk and the most charming of black lace caps, was dispensing her hospitality impartially around her. She had always made an ideal hostess, but upon that evening she quite surpassed herself. The dinner was superb, while nothing could have been more beautiful or imposing than the bridal gifts and lovely display of flowers and table appurtenances, composed of silver and gold plate and rare old china. A band, too, had come down from Lexington, and were discoursing sweetly; and while there was music, laughter and song below, Millie sat alone by the window of her solitary room.

The night was lovely, following a lovely day, and while the stars sparkled in the deep blue vault of heaven and the moonlight flooded lawn and terrace and the deep woods



beyond, she was taking a last long, lingering look of all these sublime beauties. Never had Ivy Crown appeared so grand and lovely, now that she was to leave it perhaps forever; and while she hearkened to the wild, sad strains of a waltz, tears rushed to her eyes and her bosom heaved with long drawn sighs.

“I know I will never live to see the dear old home again, but I do not care, for nothing can ever give me pleasure any more,” she told herself, sadly, while taking this farewell look, and then her eyes turned pathetically in the direction of the fish pond.

But Millie's was not the only sad heart beneath the roof of the old mansion on the night of this royal occasion, for long after the guests and bridal party had taken their departure and the house had grown quiet a solitary form might have been seen wending its way towards Morton Place, and later on, when the moon hung low and the stars were growing pale in the heavens, a man with bowed head and grief-stricken mein paced slowly beneath the windows of the old red house.

Reader, need I tell you that this man was Gerald Underwood?



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### OUT IN THE WORLD.

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, come to thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to thee for grace;  
Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee.

AND while the happy bridegroom journeys far away with his stately bride, Rosalind, too, is taking a journey, which is back to health, but alas! not happiness. She did not want to live, but by the divine law, in which she had been taught to believe, she knew that she was forbidden to take her own life, having so often heard her father say that to forestall the summons of God was one of the darkest crimes that could be perpetrated. She did not reason in these words, but she was actuated by the knowledge of their truth. An intense melancholy had settled upon her from which she could not rouse herself. She said but little, but when she arose from her sick bed a feeling of bitterness took possession of her, and she asked herself constantly why she had been permitted to live, when she was all alone in the world with the great weight of sorrow and disgrace hanging over her with no hope to lighten it. In vain Marietta and Peter strove to make her remember that she had received the kindest care from old lady Underwood while she was so ill, and that



Gerald, too, had come often with his grandmother and seemed to be so sorry, but nothing availed to give her consolation. The pride which was the strongest instinct left within her told her that it was only charity that prompted their actions, and her heart rebelled at the thought of having been the object of it.

“But I will go away next week, out of their reach, and they will never know whether I am dead or alive,” she said to herself one afternoon while she sat brooding over her trouble.

Then Marietta opened the door and said, softly:

“Miss Rosalin, Master Fred Underwood wants to see you; mus I ax him in?”

She hardly knew what to reply, for she was trying to steel her heart against all tender recollections of Ivy Crown and its inmates, and she realized that the sight of the boy would only bring them back to her; hence, she hesitated before saying to the servant that she would receive him, and, while she hesitated, Fred walked in. There was a smile on his face and a pleasant greeting on his lips as he entered the door, but when the white face and the transparent hand which Rosalind held out to him dawned upon his vision, he started back, and seemed unable to articulate a word; he was not prepared for the change he beheld in the lovely girl.

“I am glad to see you, Freddie,” Rosalind gained courage to say, while the handsome lad stood there looking at her with pity and consternation written upon every lineament of his countenance.

“Thank you, Miss Rosalind; I have been wishing to



come to see you ever since you were taken sick, but grandmamma said I must wait until you were better, and as I heard this morning that you were able to be up I came just as quick as I could get off. And Miss Rosalind, I want to tell you how sorry I am for all your trouble, and how none of us believe a word of the many stories that have been told about you—Gerry or grandmamma, or Millie or I—and we all think it will come right; but you must not feel so badly over it, for you will grieve yourself to death, and when it is all straightened up you will not be here to rejoice with us.”

Fred’s voice trembled as he spoke, and he put his hand to his face and dashed two great bright tears from his eyes, looking as if a little ashamed of his weakness.

Rosalind felt a great throb of gratitude at her heart upon hearing such genuine sympathy expressed for her and seeing the tears that had fallen in her behalf. But she was spared from answering, for there was plenty of conversation for Fred, and he changed the subject at once and went on to tell her of Millie’s bad health and Henrietta’s marriage. He also told her that Gerry was going to put him in a school at Frankfort, and then going himself to South America.

Rosalind listened to everything the youth related with a keener interest than she had felt in anything since her Aunt Vilinda’s death, and then, in turn, told him she was going to New Orleans as soon as she was well enough to travel.

Just before Fred took his leave, he put his hand in his pocket and drew out an envelope the size of a cabinet picture.



“Here is something Millie told me to give you, and as my picture is there, too, I want you to look at it some time and think of me—good-bye, Miss Rosalind.”

He held out his soft, rosy palm, and took the delicate hand within it as tenderly as if it were a little flower that he feared to crush; and again the great tears flashed in his eyes and choked his utterance.

The next moment Rosalind was alone, and turning to the window she saw the boyish form pass down the gravel walk and out of the little gate, and then her blinding tears shut him out from her vision. For some moments she stood there trying to summon to her aid that self-restraint which physical weakness seemed to have entirely shaken (that had hitherto been so habitual with her) before attempting to read Millie's letter.

The balmy September wind blew about her, wafting the perfume of the late honeysuckle that climbed over a lattice near the window, to her, while in the distance the tinkle of a cow bell sounded on the calm evening air, and the forest, changing from green to vermilion and saffron hues, lay dreamily before her.

“Where would she be, or what would have become of her by the time the trees would again put on their robes of green?” she asked herself sorrowfully.

“But I must not think; I will go mad if I keep on in this way,” she added, while she opened the envelope containing the picture and saw before her Millie's sweet face smiling up at her, while nestling against her shoulder was the handsome curly head of the younger brother.

As she looked a long, quivering sigh broke from her lips.



“How could it be possible that this beautiful girl had been the cause of so much sorrow, and worse still, disgrace, to herself?”

Alas! it was only too true, and she wondered why she did not hate her for the great wrong she had suffered at her hands.

At this moment something else fell from the envelope, and upon examination Rosalind found it was a letter addressed to herself from Millie, which ran thus:

“Dear Rosalind: I am going away to-morrow, and write this to beg your forgiveness before I leave you forever. Oh, Rosalind, if I could only undo my past folly I would freely give my life; but it is too late to regret, for all the regret in the world cannot change things; but if you could only know, Rosalind, how I have suffered and am suffering still, you would not despise me utterly. You are good and true, and your Christian faith will sustain you through everything. But where am I to turn, I who never troubled myself about those things, now that this great grief has overtaken me. I do not believe that I will live to return from my voyage, and I want you to pray for me, Rosalind, that God will give me peace, hope and rest. Do not grieve over what has happened to you, for it will all come right.

“I remain your loving and penitent friend,

“MILLIE.”

Rosalind read these lines as one would have read a message from the dead, for since Millie's disloyal conduct towards her she had come to regard such friendship, as she had professed, as evanescent as the morning dew;



and now it was that this girl had come to her asking her for her prayers, and expressing a belief that her Christian faith would be her saving grace through all her trials.

“And to think, I cannot pray for myself,” she soliloquized, sadly.

The next instant a vision arose before her of early summer mornings, dewy, perfumed, silent, save for the birds and all the soft stir of rural birth and growth around and about her, a little church with kneeling forms, herself in their midst, and her father bending over one after another administering the sacrament of the death of the Savior of the world. The emotion, the intensity, the entire self-surrender of innumerable such moments in the past came to her with overpowering realism, and again she heard his voice saying, “Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee.”

For some moments a feeling of penitence and deep humility came over her, and clasping her hands, she made a repeated attempt to pray, but recollecting that God had forsaken her, her lips remained sealed, and an expression of agony came over her face. It was at the very stage of her convalescence when everything served to irritate and weary her, and finding that the mental strain under which she labored had exhausted her physical strength, she felt obliged to retire for the night. However, she found it impossible to sleep, for her thoughts were rapidly drifting from the past to the present, and while she pondered her eyes were fixed upon her father's portrait. Then the past and the present became vaguely confused, and the moonlight without and the



lamplight within seemed to concentrate and glow around and about the loved form and face, giving to it the life and color of flesh and blood.

Then the canvas seemed to move and the figure stepped out in front of her, calling her name in soft, sweet tones. "Rosalind, Rosalind," it said, "little do you guess, child, how it grieves my spirit to know that you are miserable and cast down; but you have forgotten to look to God for peace and happiness, and have placed your affection on worldly things, and our Heavenly Father has seen fit to lay his chastening rod upon you. Remember, Rosalind, he has said unto all: 'I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have none other God but me.' Rosalind, have you hearkened unto this injunction? or have you given your love and trust to mortal, and, instead of the Creator, worshiped the creature? Pray to Him, my child, and believe on His mercy and kindness, and He will deliver you from the evil that besets you on every side. There is work for you to do in His vineyard, and you must not be found wanting."

Then slowly the vision retreated, and Rosalind awoke to find the picture hanging in its old place, and to find, also, that this apparently realistic visitation from the spirit world had only been the hallucination of a dream. But she believed that the vision had come to her in obedience to some mysterious power allowing the communion of souls, and accepted it as a divine token. With a feeling of heartfelt penitence, nearer akin to happiness than any she had experienced for weeks, the girl threw herself on her knees, imploring help and strength to sustain her,



and asking for a renewal of faith in the power and goodness of a blessed Redeemer.

When she arose she felt that her prayer had been heard and answered and a sweet peace and resignation had been given her. Two weeks later she took her leave of the old servants and bade farewell to Morton Place; however, not without writing a note of thanks to old lady Underwood for her great kindness to her during her illness; ending by saying:

“Some day I hope to prove to you I am not unworthy of anything that I have received at your hands. Until that time I bid you all adieu!”

As soon as Gerald had learned that Rosalind was indeed convalescent he had gone away; no one knew exactly where he expected to go, or what had taken him, but his first letter was postmarked Vera Cruz, Mexico. The letter stated that he would not remain long enough to receive an answer, as he was going on to South America in a few days. This had been addressed to his grandmother, and had also stated that the investments he had made three years prior had proven very successful. After asking to be kept informed as to Rosalind's health, he said:

“Since the young lady's trial has been put off until the May term of court, it will not be necessary for me to return until that time; hence I will winter in tropical climes.”

Knowing that Gerald had gone, Rosalind had nothing to regret in leaving the neighborhood, and it was with a feeling of almost cheerfulness that she gathered together



her small possessions, which consisted of a couple of trunks, her parrot, and the money her grandaunt had inclosed in her last message to her. This had not been touched, as the little sum which was left her from the sale of the horses, cattle and other belongings, after the settlement of the debts, had sufficed to pay the doctor's bill and other little expenditures, and with the small sum of one hundred dollars in her purse, Rosalind went forth in the cold world, alone and friendless, yet withal hopeful, prayerful, and resigned. The portrait of her father had been carefully boxed and expressed to New Orleans, her destination, and she had shaken the hand of John Wilkerson and his two daughters, who went to the station to see her off and wish her good luck.

"I will come back for my trial," she said when she bade them good-bye. And then, after hearing the repeated good-bys of Marietta and Peter, she had found herself ensconced in a passenger coach, en route to the Crescent City. Her journey was an uneventful one, for few of the passengers took the trouble to glance for the second time at the fair face and black-robed form of the girl, who sat so quietly in their midst; but had they known the sad story of the gentle-looking creature there was not one amongst them but would have looked with curiosity, if not pity, upon the lovely face.

And tho' Rosalind had just passed through the most bitter trials, there were none greater than those before her. A stranger in a strange city, and she a young and beautiful girl. What phase of life could be more truly touching? Upon her arrival in the city she gave



instructions to the hackman to drive her to a respectable but cheap boarding-house, which proved to be that of an Irish woman, a widow with several small children, whose appearance did not impress one with an idea of neatness any more than did the stuffy rooms of tidiness. But Rosalind had determined to try to make the best of her surroundings, no matter what they might be, and therefore endeavored to answer the landlady's questions as pleasantly as possible. When she told her that she was an orphan and had come to New Orleans for the purpose of getting employment, the woman replied: "And sure, Miss, with yer pretty face, you would have been better off to have stayed along with your frinds or relations."

"I have not a living relative and but few friends, but I am capable of taking care of myself, I think. My father gave me a good education, and I had rather put it to use than live on friends or relatives if I had them," the girl had asserted, resolutely. And the woman had been, for the time being, silenced. Rosalind asked permission to be allowed to go to the table after the other boarders had taken their meals, as she desired to be as quiet as possible, and the landlady had given a reluctant consent, thinking inwardly that the girl was wanting to play the fine lady and felt herself too good to mix with her boarders. From that time on the woman cherished a dislike to the new boarder that thought herself so much better than common people; and though Rosalind tried to win her good will by kindness and friendliness of manner, it was impossible to remove the



prejudice in her heart. The little niceties and formalities of table etiquette, so natural to Rosalind, and which appeared altogether useless to Mrs. Maloney, were a constant annoyance to her, and she never let an opportunity pass without abusing stuck-up poor people. She was not the type of Irish who are supposed to be good-natured; for though of Irish parentage, she was American born, and her association had been mostly with the commoner grade of working people, who lay no claim to refinement, and resent the advent of such proclivities in their midst. And such was the home that this refined and intellectual girl had found in that city—so full of luxuriant homes, benevolent and gifted women, and noble and elegant men, whose kind hearts would have been touched with the tenderest pity, and whose hands would have been reached out benignly to succor an unfortunate orphan (who was pure and innocent) had they but known of the existence of such in their city. But situated as Rosalind was, she was as far removed from this class as if she had been in China or Japan, for her nature was one which rather avoided that sought notice; and with her native pride still clinging to her, anything offered in the way of pity or charity would have been an insult to her sensitive feelings. So in this quiet, unobtrusive way, she spent her time, each day scanning the newspaper columns of “wanted” in search of something to do, and upon finding something she felt herself competent to undertake, she would go out at once and answer in person. But upon these occasions she would always return to her comfortable lodgings with a feeling of the greatest disappoint-



ment; for though the outlook had at first appeared favorable, as a rule references were always required, and she could furnish none. One morning upon applying for the position of governess, she was met most kindly by the lady of the house, who seemed agreeably impressed with her appearance, and, upon hearing that she had no letters of introduction with her, offered to wait until she could write for such, to which Rosalind had murmured her thanks and taken her leave, thinking as she went that there was no one who had formerly known her who could say anything in her favor until the stain that was upon her name had been removed.

“It is useless to try for a position where such as a good name is requisite, for alas! I have not that to give,” she told herself, sadly, as she wearily ascended the stairs of the untidy boarding house, where she was compelled to meet the inquisitive glances of the uncouth looking men whom she met in the hallway or on the steps, who had been informed by their landlady that the new boarder thought herself too good to go to the table when they did.

And thus it was that, with these uncongenial surroundings, days lapsed into weeks since Rosalind had found herself in this strange city, and the month of October, with its intolerably brilliant skies by day and deep-starred heavens by night, was nearly at its close, and still she had found no employment.

It seemed that her dainty and refined appearance caused those in the humbler walks of life to look on her with suspicion and disdain. This fact had been mani-



fested to her on several occasions, when she had sought for work in a tailoring establishment, and again where she had seen a notice that girls were wanted to do plain sewing.

“You are not the kind of a girl that would suit our business,” had been the reply she received at one place, and again, “You are entirely too fine for our work.”

And so it had been during this hopeless search; in all the busy world there was no place for her, she could be of no use to any one, yet she must live on, for what purpose she knew not. And tho’ she continued to trust in the goodness of God and pray night and day that the cloud might be lifted and she might yet be able to find what was required of her, there still seemed nothing before her but impenetrable gloom. Polly, too, had been a source of much uneasiness to Rosalind during this trying time, seeming to be all the time aggravated and out of sorts, and would scream derisively at the children when they would come near, as they often did to annoy and torment her, oftentimes becoming furious. Then when Rosalind would close the door upon the noisy intruders and try to soothe and quiet the bird, it would cry out, pathetically, “Poor Polly, poor Polly; Polly sick, Rosa sick, so sick; go to bed, Rosa, go to bed.” And in spite of Rosalind’s resolve to be brave and try to bear all things patiently, at these times she would lean her head against Polly’s cage and weep for hours at a time.

Quite a considerable amount had been spent out of her little sum for her railway ticket and other traveling expenses, and notwithstanding that her board only cost her



three dollars per week, the constant drainage on her means had decreased the sum to forty dollars; what would become of her when it was all spent?

“Why don’t you sell that parrot?” the landlady asked, coming in abruptly one day while Rosalind sat meditatively by the window.

“I would not part with it under any circumstances; my grandaunt left me the bird when she died, and requested that I should keep it always,” Rosalind replied, with some spirit.

“Well, to be sure, Miss, I spose you are right, but I can tell ye that it’s getting pretty troublesome, and some of me boarders have complained not a little about it botherin thim at nights.”

At this juncture a handsome carriage flashed by, and the face of one of the women who occupied it appeared very familiar to Rosalind; then the driver pulled up for a moment to arrange some of the harness, and the eyes of the woman fell upon the girl at the window. She bowed familiarly, and Rosalind recognized Mrs. Norton, whom she had last seen at Niagara. When she turned to speak to Mrs. Maloney, she was regarding her inquisitively.

“And it’s the loiks uv thim ye know, is it? Thim people who live on Customhouse street, and roll by in their fine carriages every blisid day in the week the Lord sends,” she said indignantly before Rosalind had time to explain.

“The lady who spoke to me lives in Kentucky, or did when I knew her; and if she resides here now, I had not heard it,” she replied innocently.



During her few weeks in the city she had learned nothing of the streets and localities, and thus it was that the insinuation thrown out by the landlady was lost upon her.

“Holy saints. I wonder if it’s me that’s going to be imposed upon by a creature who pretends to be too good for the sun to shine on? But how could I expect anything better from a young thing like herself out all alone in this large city?” muttered the woman as she left the room and went to confide her trouble to Bridget, who was maid of all work in the dingy boarding-house.

An hour later two women attired in dark dresses, one of whom wore a heavy veil, knocked at the so-termed respectable boarding-house of the widow Maloney, and inquired if a young lady by the name of Morton was stopping there, upon which the untidy servant showed them up the stairway, and pointed to Rosalind’s door, saying: “Knock at the door, mem, sure the young leddy is always in.”

It was quite a surprise to Rosalind to find Mrs. Norton rapping at her door, and following close upon her tracks another woman, closely veiled.

“I saw you when I passed here awhile ago, and I persuaded my lady friend, Miss Blanche, to come with me down here.”

“I am glad to see you, Mrs. Norton; come in and sit down,” replied Rosalind cordially, placing chairs for the two.

“I was never so much surprised in my life as to see you at such a rickety old place as this. How in the world



did it happen that you struck such a place?" asked Mrs. Norton with her abrupt familiarity, her eyes roving over the room and coming back to fasten themselves upon the beautiful face of the girl.

"As you are perhaps already aware, my grandaunt died, and having no other relatives, and nothing left to depend upon I came here to find some occupation. Of course, you have heard all about the dis—trouble that fell upon me?"

"Disgrace; yes, why didn't you speak it out. I like to hear people call things by their right names, and I might as well tell you why I am in New Orleans, and why I come to see you to-day. You see you need some one to help you on, and I have brought the one to you that can do the thing for you, and put you in a way to take care of yourself handsomely. You are very pretty, my dear! That you already know, of course, and are the very kind of a girl that will take, so I brought this lady with me to see if you would come with her to board, and get out of this dirty hole. It is very foolish of you to live in such a place when you can have a nice, elegant room, and everything you want, by coming with her."

Rosalind looked at the two women inquiringly; she did not understand Mrs. Norton's meaning, but she was displeased with her manner and the insolent tone she had employed while addressing her.

"You are indeed very handsome," repeated the other, with lingering emphasis, "and are only throwing away valuable time while you hide yourself away in such a den; what do you say about going with me?" she asked, a little doubtfully.



"I would gladly do so if I could find employment that would defray my expenses; Mrs. Norton perhaps has not heard that my aunt left me entirely without means, and I am sure such comfort as she describes would be worth much more than I can at present afford; however, I thank you both for your kindly interest in me," rejoined Rosalind, in a grateful tone.

"Is the girl a fool, or is she posing for virtuous?" asked the woman of Mrs. Norton, sotto voce.

"If you will give me time I will find out," answered Mrs. Norton, tartly. Then, turning to Rosalind, she went on:

"Yes, I heard all about that, and also about your affair with Edgar Wilkerson. So you see you ain't fooling me one bit by playing so innocent; but I never believed that you killed him, if he did happen to be your lover, for you ain't one of the kind to do such a thing. But don't be foolish and try to hide things from me, for I have had a little experience in your line myself."

"I do not understand you," returned the girl, every vestage of color fading from her face.

"Well, to be plain, I will say it again: it is right down foolishness to grieve after one man when there are so many in the world; and the proper thing to do is to look out for yourself. I might have settled down and grieved over that English lord, for, to tell the truth about it, I was dead gone on him; but when he fooled me into getting Norton's money and running off and then left me, I knew all I had to do was to make the best of a bad bargain, for I would have killed myself before I would have gone back to Norton and been sneered at by them high-



flyers; so I just looked around till I found out a few things, and then went to this lady's house to board where all the swellest women of the town stop, and there is nothing small about—”

She had proceeded this far when a sudden movement from Rosalind arrested her speech; the girl had arisen and was standing erect before her, her blue eyes flashing, her cheeks flushing and paling by turns.

“I know now what you mean; I did not understand at first,” she answered, with the vibration of intense emotion in her voice. “But hear me, Mrs. Norton, I am not what you suppose me to be, and did not dream that you had sunk so low. I do not condemn, but pity, you; neither do I blame you for coming to me on the mission you have, thinking what you do of me. No doubt you mean well after your own idea of such; but rather than give myself up to a life of shame, I would perish of starvation, were it possible, ten thousand times over and over again; for it would be a far more desirable fate to starve than to sacrifice my soul to preserve the body. All the persuasion in the world cannot tempt me from my purpose—go.”

She pointed to the door as she spoke, and the two women, completely baffled, turned away.

“Come on,” said the companion of the ex-Mrs. Norton; “if the girl is straight let her remain so.”

Mrs. Norton laughed a little rude laugh, and stopped to stare at Rosalind with cold, unsympathetic eyes.

“You are a great goose, I must say. I was only trying to help you, and you get up what the boys would call ‘a scene.’ ”



Then, angered more than she would have cared to have acknowledged by the mistake she had made, she followed the other woman down the narrow stairway. She had made the mistake which is usually made by an ignoble mind—having not the least conception of a noble character. She felt sure that the girl was lying to her, but there was a look in her blue eyes that forbade her saying as much, and caused her to make her exit in a most quiet manner. Scarcely had the echo of their footsteps died away when again there was a knock on the door, but ere Rosalind had time to open it Mrs. Maloney, with an infuriated expression on her face, burst into the room.

“And it’s the likes of you that would impose yourself upon a poor widow who tries to keep a respectable boarding house, is it? What would the priest say if he knew that I was harboring sich as you; and what would Patrick Maloney, who has bin lying peacefully in his grave for the last four years, say, to be told that his respectable widow was keeping a girl in her house that recaved the company of those ‘soiled duves’—as the newspapers call thim—at her respectable place? I say, yung leddy, you must git out right at once; I won’t have the likes of you in me house another hour; so take your bag and baggage and git.”

In vain did Rosalind try to explain that she did not know the character of the women; but all that she could glean from the disconnected harangue, in which the landlady continued to indulge, was that she had sent Bridget to follow the women home, having had her suspicions already aroused. She had been quick to suspect that the two, notwithstanding their plain attire, were the same who had bowed to Rosalind from the carriage, and



had found her surmises correct, thereby finding sufficient excuse for turning the orphan from under her roof.

So it was that Mrs. Norton, after her own coarse idea of helping a woman on in the world, had caused Rosalind to again be a homeless wanderer on the streets of a large city. After hours of search for some place to lodge, Rosalind at last procured a furnished room in a tenement house—not comfortable, but cheap—and tho' the outlook was anything but pleasant or cheerful, and the fumes of some obnoxious drug from a den of Chinese laundrymen was borne to her with every passing breeze, she tried to feel content, thinking that she could at least have peace if nothing else. Her books which she had brought with her would be of some comfort to her, Polly would not have so much to annoy her, and she could occupy some of her time by cooking her own meals.

These were her resolves and conclusions upon thinking over her present situation. The unkind and very uncouth behavior of Mrs. Maloney did not hurt her as much as the nature of Mrs. Norton's visit had done, both of which savored of ignorance, but it was plain to her from the words of the latter that those who had formerly known her looked upon her in the same light that the woman had expressed. She had never fully realized the true significance of the crime of which she was suspected until this day, for her innocence had not conceived of such a charge being brought against her, hence her humiliation was then complete. And while she thought of this her lips closed in dumb silence, shutting out the cry that rose from her heart: "Oh, beloved, beloved, can it be that you are lost to me forever, forever."



## CHAPTER XXV.

### ROSALIND'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

"Still the angel stars are shining,  
Still the rippling waters flow,  
But the angel-voice is silent  
That I heard so long ago;  
Hark, the echoes murmur low—  
Long ago!"

THE weeks dragged on wearily to Rosalind—how wearily none but those who have suffered sad reverses can imagine. Those who have reached out and plucked the flowers of human happiness, only to see them wither in their grasp, until, leaf by leaf, every rose has fallen; drop by drop every vein of their heart's blood has ceased to flow; when one has learned the sad and bitter lessons that life teaches and has seen sin flaunting in rich attire and honesty clothed in rags; when one has prayed and trusted in a divine power for help and strength for weeks and months, and yet no help has come.

It was Christmas Eve, and everything without presented a glittering show, as is usual upon this occasion in every town and city in the universe, but never before had the Crescent City made such a grand display.

The streets were crowded with people, each one seemingly intent on purchasing a present for some loved one, for there were gifts set forth in brilliant array to suit all ages and all classes, from gayly tinted boxes of bon-bons



to sparkling jewels costing a small fortune. All of the churches were magnificently decorated, while before the flower-laden altar of the cathedral was the image of the babe Jesus lying in his manger. Everything was in readiness for the early mass within these consecrated walls, while without were also tokens of good cheer and rejoicing. In all this large city there was not one so alone or completely isolated from human sympathy and love as was Rosalind. In all the world there was no one to bestow upon her one little gift of remembrance, but instead, all that remained to her as a reminder of happier days was about to be taken from her, for on that night of universal rejoicing Polly, her Aunt Vilinda's last gift, lay dying. The bird had never seemed happy nor content since leaving Morton Place, and it really appeared that it was endowed sufficiently with human instinct to understand the discomforts with which it was surrounded, consequently had spent the long weeks fretting and railing at the sights and sounds that loomed up on every side, finally growing sick and refusing to eat or drink, and then lay in the last throes of death.

"Poor Polly, poor Polly, you were my last earthly tie," thought Rosalind, while her tears fell thick and fast on the limp creature, and then it seemed that the fortitude and self-denial which had been uppermost in her life these last sad months were indeed about to forsake her.

The many months in which she had shut her lingering grief silently within her own heart was telling on her physically, as it will on the strongest constitution. Solitude of thought and absence of sympathy had the effect on her



youth and timidity that a chilling frost has upon a tender plant which through neglect has been left unprotected, for it is natural that under the strain of great mental suffering the whole being becomes morbid, the senses dulled, and it is as tho' we had ceased to live. Patience and piety fail to comfort and the hopelessness of despair settles upon us.

Rosalind did not realize that the unselfishness and loftiness of her nature had placed her in the questionable position which she then occupied, for had she explained to Gerald, even on the occasion of their last meeting, how matters stood between Millie and Edgar Wilkerson, suspicion would not have fallen so heavily upon her; at least Gerald would have believed her guiltless, and that would have been everything to her. How she had loved him, and loved him still, with all the intensity of her loyal nature—even in her poverty and seclusion not thinking of herself, but thinking of him and praying that a divine power would watch over him and protect him from harm or danger.

“If I, too, could only die to-night,” she thought, sadly, while she watched her parrot's breath grow shorter and shorter, “no one would ever miss me or regret me in any way; then why is it that I am left here to grope in the darkness when the light of immortality alone can shed brightness on my future? Oh, God, be merciful and receive my soul!” she murmured, “there is nothing left me in this world.”

Then she laid her head close to the dying bird, and a kind of oblivious stupor stole over her. How long she



lay thus she did not know, when suddenly she was awakened by a ringing, rushing sound which burst upon the silence. Bells, sweet, joyous toned bells, very tongues of melody, were chiming in softest tones of eloquence, now falling upon her ear low and sweet as the cradle song of a new mother, then rising higher and higher in rich, full notes of triumphant jubilee, and finally dispersing themselves in delicate, broken echoes: "Peace on earth, good will to men. Peace—on—earth,—good—will—to—men," they seemed to say over and over again.

It was early morning, and this was the Christmas mass. But to Rosalind these good tidings meant nothing—she who was one apart from human life, an alien from its friendships, its loves, and all that made it worth living. There was nothing for her to rejoice over; no kind and loving Savior had stretched forth a hand to help and save her, she who had never harmed mortal man or woman, who would even step aside in her daily walks rather than crush a creeping thing; yet while all people were rejoicing over this festive occasion, even the very poorest sharing in its celebration by giving and receiving little friendly gifts, there was not even left to her the greeting of Polly's voice on this Christmas morning, for while she had slept the poor forlorn creature had breathed its last. With her brain full of these whirling thoughts, Rosalind arose and opened the window. The bells had ceased, and a profound hush had again fallen over the city. A cold dew, that could scarcely be termed a frost, lay chillingly upon the window panes and dampened the earth. The girl shivered and turned away.



“I must make poor Polly a casket,” she thought, opening a trunk and searching about its contents with some faint interest.

Pretty soon her search seemed rewarded, for she drew out a satin covered box, which she had made only one year ago for her father's slippers and presented it to him as one of her Christmas offerings. Only a year since that happy Christmas day; but alas, what ages it seemed had passed since then. And yet while she held the box in her hand everything that had happened on that day rose up as vividly before her as if it were but yesterday. She remembered her father's peaceful, happy countenance as it beamed upon her across the table, for though traces of ill health were upon it at that time, there was no murmur or complaint on the dear lips.

She remembered, too, that their Christmas cake had been a plum pudding, fashioned after old Martha's extravagant manner of cooking—very rich and indigestible. And again she remembered how, before the meal was over, something had been added to their dinner from nearly every house in the village, until their table fairly groaned under sundry dishes of turkey, chicken, roast, cake, tarts, and everything that could be thought of in the way of eatables. She remembered, also, her father's amusement upon viewing the great variety spread out before him.

“One can not help but wonder what the unusual display of victuals upon this day has to do with the coming of the Savior, whom we are told arrived among us in such a lowly estate that even a roof was denied him,” he had remarked upon surveying this feast.



“Surely there is nothing symbolic in such a commemoration of Christ—nothing poetic, nothing graceful, nothing even orthodox, for the Orientals among whom he was born are very small eaters, especially in the use of meat. In spite of our Christianized land such as this always reminds me of the feasts the ancient Greeks and Romans offered to their gods.”

Thus it was while Rosalind put a few finishing touches upon the box that was to serve for Polly's casket, memory bells were ringing back to her of that happy time in tones sadder and sweeter than *Æolian* harp chords, touched by the gentle fingers of passing zephyrs. And while, as if by the hand of magic, she was led back into the past, she lifted the remains of the bird gently from the pillow, and wrapping some soft white material about its stiffened limbs placed it in the silken-lined casket.

“I will go out to the cemetery to-day and ask the sexton to let me have a little grave for the poor bird,” she soliloquized as she completed these preparations, and sat down to watch beside her dead, almost envying the peacefulness of its repose, from which no discordant sound could ever again awaken it.

“But it will not be long before I, too, will be given this peace and rest. Only a few farthings remain to me, and when that is gone I will have nothing with which to buy food to sustain me, hence will die of starvation. God knows I have tried to do my duty in aiding myself to live—tho' my happiness is forever wrecked—but everything has failed me, and if my Heavenly Father so wills that my body should perish in this way, so be it.”



For some moments she sat there meditating upon this when suddenly her eyes chanced to fall on the empty cage; then she bethought herself of what her aunt Vilinda had written her in regard to it, in case of her buying a new cage for the bird: "Take the old one to pieces and keep it in remembrance of me," she had instructed.

"I will do this right now while I think of it, for I cannot well bear the sight of the empty cage," she thought, taking it down and commencing her task. It was a strongly built cage, and Rosalind worked some time before detaching the top. This being at last accomplished, she proceeded to remove the bottom, which proved a still more difficult undertaking, for, while she worked, she discovered that there were two distinct layers of zinc forming this part, separated by almost an inch. Before either of these pieces could be removed, her attention was attracted by a small spring, so small as to be scarcely perceptible. With a sudden movement she placed her finger upon this and pressed against it, when, quick as thought, the intervening strip slipped downward, disclosing the interior. Mechanically she placed her hand within the aperture and drew out a roll of something wrapped in tissue paper. One after another of these rolls were drawn out until ten of them lay before her, all securely wrapped.

"I will see what it is that Aunt Vilinda has hidden away so carefully," she thought, unwrapping the delicate roll of tissue from one of the packages.

Then, all of a sudden, an exclamation of surprise and gladness fell from the girl's lips—for there, before her astonished eyes, lay roll upon roll of paper money.



Bewildered as one in a dream, she took up roll at a time and counted it, finding that, in all, the sum amounted to ten thousand dollars; while written upon a small scrap of paper were these words:

“To my dear and honored niece, Rosalind Morton, I give and bequeath the sum of ten thousand dollars.

(Signed) “VILINDA MARMADUKE MORTON.”

Then slowly the facts of the case all dawned upon Rosalind. The good old aunt had mortgaged the Morton Place for seventeen thousand dollars; with the seven thousand she had paid her debts, while the remaining ten thousand had been hidden in Polly's cage for the benefit of herself. The aunt had never dreamed of the dire misfortunes which would assail her grandniece after her death or else she would have placed this money more readily at her disposal.

“Saved! saved; heaven be praised!” cried the girl, sinking on her knees and clasping her hands in a prayer of thankfulness.

Yes, heaven be praised, Rosalind was saved—saved from the jarring insults and cold suspicion of the world; saved from the prison walls of the lowly tenement house; saved from contact with the filth and ignominy of the depraved classes of the poor; saved from the cruel pangs of hunger and cold! Chime again, sweet bells, and echo back that joyful shout, “Heaven be praised, heaven be praised!”

Truly, a Savior was born into the world, whose love still aboundeth and whose mercy and goodness abideth forever.

Then let the joy bells still ring forth their glad tidings: Glory to God in the highest—peace and good will to men!



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### REVELATIONS.

“ Still the wood is dim and lonely,  
Still the plashing fountains play,  
But the past and all its beauty—  
Whither has it fled away?  
Hark the mournful echoes say—  
Fled away!

“ Cease, oh echoes, mournful echoes!  
Once I loved your voices well;  
Now my heart is sick and weary,  
Days of old a long farewell!  
Hark! the echoes, sad and dreary,  
Cry farewell! farewell!”

**A** GAIN it was lovely springtime. April, with its smiles and tears, its bursting buds of leaf and flower, was scattering its beauties far and near; and while its light zephyrs were sweeping softly over the land, beautiful Ivy Crown, with its variegated borders of early flowers, of white and purple, blue and gold, looked even as lovely as in the noontide of summer, when the grounds are ablaze with bloom and verdure. It was evening, soft, balmy and cool. A week-old moon, bright as burnished silver, sat in the midst of countless stars and looked serenely down on the peaceful beauty of the scene. The liquid plash of the fountains murmured musically, sounding cool and fresh to the ear, while in the distance the song of a whippoorwill could be heard chanting its evening lay.



But notwithstanding this sublime peacefulness without, there was sadness and gloom within, for Millie, the beautiful idol of the household, lay sick unto death. Nothing had sufficed to eradicate the brooding melancholy that had never left her since the tidings of Edgar Wilkerson's death, tho' the father and party had spent the greatest part of their time while abroad in lingering at places they had hoped would benefit her; but neither had the sunny skies, delightful climate nor beautiful scenery of Italy had any more desirable effect upon her than had India, with its many strange sights—Pagan religion, Juggernaut god and holy river Ganges. Paris, too, had been visited—that city of which Heinrich Heine has said, "Not only is it the capital of France, but of the whole civilized world, and the rendezvous of its most brilliant intellects." Here Judge Underwood had placed his ailing daughter under the treatment of one of the most celebrated German physicians, who, after some weeks of skillful attention, had said, "Ach, Gott, it is no use to try longer, there is no hope; take her home." And the heart-broken father had obeyed.

Hence Henrietta had not carried out her cherished wish of completing her tour of the Orient by going through Persia and into that paradise by the Caspian sea, where it is the custom for brides to ride about the country on sturdy little gray asses, through meadows richly fragrant with wild hyacinths and mignonette, and then to have crossed the Persian gulf and gone over into Arabia and Turkey and visited Damascus, Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Not because of the fact that Damascus was the most



ancient city in the world, or that Christ had been born at Bethlehem and crucified at Jerusalem, did the new bride wish to see those landmarks of antiquity, but because it was according to the latest society fad. However, Millie's ill-health had prevented them extending their tour beyond India, and now they were all back at Ivy Crown, with the exception of Mrs. Porter, who had stopped at Frankfort.

Since this lady had recently become engaged to marry the Judge she felt a delicacy in returning to Ivy Crown as a guest. Owing to Millie's rapid decline, the Judge desired the announcement withheld from his family for some months yet, and the widow, feeling assured that the sick girl cherished for her a secret ill-will, gladly acquiesced. Upon this evening the family were all assembled around the downy couch of the invalid, whose flower-like face, thin and drawn by suffering, and almost as white as the snowy pillows upon which it lay turned anxiously from one to the other.

"Do I realize it, that again I am at home?" she murmured pathetically. "Yes, we are all here but Gerald."

On one side of the bed sat an Episcopal minister, who had come to administer the sacrament, while on the other knelt the doting grandmother.

"My daughter, will you not eat of the bread and drink of the wine of eternal life with me?" asked the minister, bending gently over her.

A paroxysm of pain flitted over the white face upon hearing the good man's words.

"No, no, I can not, I will not; I am not worthy. I



only want to see my brother Gerald once more, and then I think I will be content to die," she cried impulsively.

So, finding it to be a useless task to urge her further, the minister, after a touching prayer, took his leave, promising the weeping grandmother that he would return the following day.

"We are expecting Gerald home hourly," she explained while bidding him good-bye.

Gerald had been telegraphed for. He was at Vera Cruz, having landed on his return from South America, when they last heard, and there had come an immediate answer to the message, saying "that he would start home on the next steamer."

It was the same evening just described when Gerald debarked at New Orleans; and, finding that the north-bound train due to leave that place was two hours late, he determined to walk about the city. There was a look of weariness and dissatisfaction upon his handsome face, and his lips wore their old habitual expression of cynicism. His life had been anything but a happy one since leaving Ivy Crown; but, for the sake of drowning old memories, he had plunged into business that required both tact and skill. Three years prior he had bought shares in a gold mine in Mexico, which was at this time yielding abundantly, and though finance had always been obnoxious to him, he had endeavored with all his will to concentrate his whole attention upon it. He was deeply grieved at the knowledge of Millie's illness, and while he wandered aimlessly around his thoughts went back to the springtime of a year ago, when the fair young face had dawned upon



him and he saw the child he had left scarce four years before a blooming young woman. And associated with that time, there came another face before his mental vision, one that had scarcely ever left his memory since he had first seen it, and that was the face of Rosalind Morton. And while his thoughts wandered back to her on that night, he softly repeated—

“The world is wide, our ways are drear;  
A river flows between.  
Ah, me! the distant days, sweetheart,  
And all that might have been.”

“Why, Gerald, is it possible? the very last person in the world I was expecting to meet to-night,” said a familiar voice beside him.

“And I am just as agreeably surprised,” returned Gerald, shaking the hand that Henry Courts extended.

Then followed mutual explanations. Henry had not heard of Millie’s illness, or the family’s return from abroad, and expressed much concern. He had come to New Orleans partly to attend to some business for his father, and partly on an excursion of pleasure. Then the two walked on, while Henry related all the happenings of any import in the Bluegrass since Gerald’s absence. Everything was discussed, even the coming trial of Rosalind Morton, which had been set for the following month.

“I have heard that she will have no difficulty in coming off scott free, as there has been no prosecution, and it may be that the case will not be called. I wonder what ever did become of her? You know it is said that the old aunt’s property was all taken for debt, and the girl left with



only enough money to get away from the neighborhood."

Gerald had never heard of this before; his feelings at that time had been too much perturbed about other things to have given this matter any attention. And now he shuddered at the thought of the beautiful, unfortunate girl being alone and penniless out in the cold and uncharitable world—she who had impressed him with the idea of being so far removed from womankind that it was impossible to think of her in connection with them; what would she do adrift, without home, friends or protection of any kind? she, whom he had looked upon as being far too pure and saintly to live in the corrupt atmosphere of modern society; how could it be possible for her to mingle with the common clay of ordinary humanity?

They were nearing a church at this time, around which a great crowd had gathered, while the interior seemed to be packed full.

"There is a great evangelist preaching here to-night; would you like to go in?" Henry asked, as they drew near.

"No, I believe not, as I do not like a crowd," Gerald answered, then paused involuntarily, for the deep-toned organ had sounded its prelude, and the choir commenced to sing. "Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee! e'en though it be a cross that raiseth me," rang out in great swelling notes on the still air; and as this was a favorite hymn of Gerald's, he stood and listened.

"We will go in if it is possible," said Gerald, leading the way at once and with the greatest difficulty pushing through the crowded doorway up the aisle. Tho' his face



was calm, his heart was wildly beating with expectancy, for while the choir sang, one voice had arisen higher and higher, richer and fuller than all the rest, and in that grand, sonorous voice there was a lingering pathos that sounded sweetly familiar. At last they were near enough to get a view of the minister and the pulpit, with its overhanging dark green foliage and bunches of la France roses, but they could not see the faces of the singers—at least Gerald could not, and his anxiety to catch a glimpse of the owner of the angelic voice had grown intense.

“Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer my God, to thee,  
Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee!”

chanted the choir, while in their midst, as tho' the heavens had opened and given an angel flight to lead her voice on and on to grandeur and sweetness, came the ravishing strains of this harmonious vocalist. Higher and higher, richer and richer, clearer and clearer flowed the melody, until nearly all the congregation, who had first joined the singers, had ceased, and were listening with breathless rapture to the enchanting voice.

“Come this way, Gerald, if you wish to see the new St. Cecilia; I have just succeeded in getting a sight of her,” said Henry, drawing Gerald towards him. “Now the question is, who is this inspired songstress? Is there not something familiar about her?” asked Henry, significantly.

But the question was lost upon Gerald, for he was gazing as one spellbound, dumb with admiration and aston-



ishment, for there before him was the classic face, the lovely blue eyes, beaming with a divine light, yet wearing a shade of sadness in their violet depths; the perfect curves of her willowy form clearly defined in the white dress; the golden gleams amid the coils of rich auburn hair shining out distinctly in the light of the chandelier, her whole attitude bespeaking restful, devotional thoughts, and looking a saint indeed, stood Rosalind Morton. Then the organ pealed out a long drawn refrain, and the choir sat down, but still Gerald remained standing there as one transfixed.

"I say, do you recognize the face?" asked Henry, eagerly.

Gerald nodded a reply, fearing if he should speak his voice would betray him.

"It doesn't look much like that of a murderess, does it?" went on Henry, little dreaming how his light words jarred upon the most sensitive chords of Gerald's nature.

The minister arose at this moment, and Gerald realized that it was time for him to go—his train would soon be due.

Two days later he reached home, to hear that Millie was rapidly sinking.

"She cannot possibly last twenty-four hours longer, the doctor says, and her whole thoughts are of you," were the words of the weeping grandmother, and without delay he went to the room of the dying girl.

"Gerry, Gerry, thank God you have come," Millie whispered, holding up her emaciated arms and placing them about his neck.



The brother bent forward and great tears rolled down his cheeks, and sobs shook his strong form; he was not prepared to witness the sad change that had taken place in the sister since he had last seen her, and was therefore unable to control his shocked emotion.

“I am so glad that you have come,” she continued, “for I could not die in peace until I had seen you and told you the secret that lies heavy on my heart. Grand-mamma, please leave us alone, as what I have to say is to Gerry only. When I am gone he can tell you all.”

The old lady administered a cordial, and then quietly withdrew. Gerald raised the frail little body and adjusted the pillows, and Millie continued:

“I must be brief, Gerry, for my hours are numbered, but I must tell you and ask your forgiveness before it is all over with me; but I fear when you have heard my story you will think that there ought not to be any forgiveness for such wickedness, either human or divine.”

“Millie, I could forgive you anything, though I think your illness has made whatever the misdemeanor might be appear tenfold greater. I cannot conceive of my little sister ever having committed a sin of any kind. But if it will be of any comfort to you to tell me, do not hesitate.”

“You do not know what a wicked girl I was; but when I tell you that I disobeyed papa, and caused a great deal of trouble to another person, you will have some idea how very bad I have been. But, Gerry, I didn’t mean it at the time, and only thought of one thing in the world, and that was my love for Edgar Wilkerson.”

At these words Gerald started with an exclamation of



surprise; but before he could ask a question Millie went on:

“I knew you did not dream of such a thing, and that you all looked upon me as a child, but not so, for I was a woman at heart, and loved him with all the fervor and worshipful affection that it is possible for any woman to feel. Papa heard something hinted to the effect that we were sweethearts, and took me to task about it, telling me to have as little to say to Edgar as possible, and by no means to encourage his attentions, and then it was that I went to Rosalind Morton and asked her to favor me by being the bearer of messages between us.”

Here Millie paused, and Gerald without a word sat looking at her with consternation written upon his white face.

“I cannot say much more, Gerald, but I must try to tell you how this sweet girl begged that I would not do anything of this kind, and how I got angry and told her she did not care for me, by this means gaining her consent; and how she was talked about for meeting Edgar in Victoria Park the night before she left Niagara. Gerry, Gerry, hear me and forgive; it was I who sent her to the park that night with a message for Edgar.”

Gerald arose to his feet and stood regarding Millie with scorn and disgust expressed upon his face, then said hoarsely: “Millie, Millie, how could you do such a thing and then not say a word in defense of the wronged girl? It seems impossible for an Underwood to ever stoop to such an act as to allow an innocent girl to suffer the consequences of such a folly. How could you, Millie? How could you?”



“Gerry, you promised to forgive me, and if you knew the tortures I have suffered you would not censure me too harshly. I have longed to tell you this, that you might try and find Rosalind and have all this story cleared up about her being anything to Edgar Wilkerson. You will do it, Gerry; I know you will.”

“I will try, Millie; but tell me, what did the note mean that was written in Rosalind’s hand, and signed by her, asking Edgar to meet her in the park that night?”

“It must have been some of Mrs. Porter’s work, Gerry, for she was the one who found my note to Edgar, and advised me not to meet him, but send a friend. She was jealous of Rosalind on your account, and brought up everything she could against the poor girl.”

The sick girl had spoken with difficulty throughout, and now she lay back faint and exhausted. Before another word could be uttered there came a rap at the door.

“There is a gentleman in the hall asking for you,” said the servant, whom Gerald found waiting at the door.

“I will come back in a little while, Millie,” he said, kissing her wan cheek; then following the boy into the hall.

It was no little surprise to Gerald to find the sheriff waiting to see him, but he greeted him kindly and asked him to be seated. “No, I thank you,” returned the officer, “my business is of the greatest importance, which really concerns your father, but since we have not the least idea of his whereabouts, I will be glad if you will go with me; the fact is, there is another inquest to be held at the fish pond on your premises, and we wanted



to get over with it as quickly as possible. It is perfectly necessary that some of your family should be present."

"In the name of God, who is the unfortunate victim this time?" asked Gerald, in a tone of horror.

"That is just what we are trying to find out," said the officer, as the two started in a rapid pace towards the ill-fated fish pond. "You see, there has been any amount of excitement amongst the negroes, who work the farms about here, for the last three months. It seems that they were all impressed with the idea that this locality was infested with ghosts and hobgoblins of all descriptions. Some of the white people, too, claim to have seen the most unaccountable sights while riding along this immediate vicinity. Then suddenly everything calmed down, and until the last two weeks there was no excitement. Within that time there has arisen from the pond a terrible stench—so offensive, in truth, that the people were obliged to ride miles out of their way to avoid coming near it. Well, to cut a long story short, old man Wilkerson, who has been greatly exercised over the various reports concerning his dead son—having heard it vaguely hinted that it was the spirit of Edgar that was roving about, and that the obnoxious smell was some diabolical influence brought about by his boy being murdered there—sent a telegram to Louisville asking the detective, that he and yourself employed at the time of Edgar's death, to come down. This morning he came, and the first thing he ordered was that the pond should be dragged; and what do you suppose they found? Why, the most hideous looking thing that in all my life I have ever seen, which is noth-



ing more nor less than the fearful mystery that has baffled the skill of the most diligent people of this part of the country who have tried every way to trace it and find out where it belonged—but here we are at the place.”

The officer was too busy talking to observe Gerald's agitation while hearing this, and every one present was also too much occupied to give heed to his pale cheeks when he arrived in their midst. The coroner had already assembled his witnesses some distance from where lay the dead body, and was swearing them in. Gerald, too, was arraigned as one of the witnesses, and then the court proceeded to business. The first witness examined was a negro man who had been employed on Judge Underwood's farm for several years. He testified to having seen the creature while living on several occasions, but could not say who it was connected with, tho' he suspected the Underwoods were knowing to it.

“I don't know notin more bout hit, but ole Uncle Jake Underwood kin tell you somthin if anybody can,” he ended by saying.

So accordingly Jake was called.

“What's your name, sir?” was the first question put to the old darkey, who was shaking visibly and had turned ashen pale.

“Jake Underwood, sar,” was the quavering reply.

“Well, Jake, we want you to tell us **everything** you know about the body you have just looked upon, and we want the truth, and nothing but the truth, or you will suffer the penalty at the hands of the law. Do you understand, sir?”



"Yes, sar," repeated Jake.

"Well, proceed now."

And Jake, with much stammering and repetitions, told his story, which was, omitting the negro dialect, as follows:

He had belonged to Judge Underwood's father, and then had fallen to the son. There had been only two children, the Judge and a daughter, who was eight years his junior, two children between the brother and sister having died in infancy. The Judge had married while the young Misses was yet at school, and then the war came up, and tho' he, Jake, was free after its close, he had stayed along with his master. Twenty-nine years ago the young Misses had come home from boarding school, very beautiful and talented and much sought after. At this time the Judge had only one child, which was Master Gerald, and the grandmother and mother and blooming young lady, and the Judge, had made the very happiest family that could be imagined, until there came trouble into the household.

An artist was in the neighborhood who was painting portraits, and nothing would do the young Misses but she, too, should sit for her picture. Before the work was finished the artist had gained the lady's affection, and she had acknowledged the fact to her mother and brother, both of whom had become furious, and he had been ordered off the place and the young lady threatened with a convent, when suddenly she was missing, and the news came back that she had eloped with the handsome young artist. Then there had come letters begging for forgive-



ness, and saying that she could not have lived without her loved husband; but they had all taken a vow never to write to her or speak to her again, and therefore had paid no attention to the letters, and only the Judge's wife would read them, and feel sorry. For a long time they heard nothing, then a letter came, saying that her husband was sick and asking that they would send her a mere pittance of what was hers by right, but this entreaty had been treated with silent contempt, as had the others. She was disowned by all her people and an alien from her home. Then came the saddest part yet of old Jake's story, and while he told it the silence was intense.

"But de very worst of it's to cum," continued the old man, wiping his eyes, and looking around. "One night when hit was rainin cats and dogs somthin was heard crying and hollerin out in de fine ole flower garden of Ivy Croun, but being as nobody herd hit but de servants, nobody didn't go out, and de next mornin dey found de purty young Misses layin thar wid great handful of hare what she had pulled out of her head, stone ded, and thar by her side was a new-born babe."

Again the old negro paused and looked uneasily around him.

"Go on, Jake; don't be afraid to tell what you know," said the coroner briefly. Thus reassured, Jake continued:

"Well, they all thought hit was ded, too; but when dey moved it hit began to cry, and so de grandmother had my wife take hit up to my cabin and tend to hit, and hit libed on, and by de time hit was old enuff to walk,



wus the ugliest creeter de sun eber shone on, and hit wus more like a wild varmint then a human bein; and as hit growed older hit got wose and wose, till by an by dey sent hit to a doctor, and he sed hit was de wose kind of ediot he'd eber seen. Well, when hit got tu be bout twelve yars old, de white folks put hit in sum kin of hinsitute, but hit was sich a terror dat dey wouldn't hab hit and sont hit back; den my ole oman died, and den de Jedge put me to tend to hit, and, gent'men of de jury, I ken not begin to tell you what a time I hev had wid hit. No matter how keerful I wus wid de creeter, hit would scape me and run like a deer through dem woods; and many nights I hab spent sarching de woods ober to find hit, and den hit would scratch an bite me like all fires; and many scars I'll kerry tu my grabe dat hit gib me. Of couse I knowed all bout what it wus dat made de people think dar wuz ghosts round here, but den I wus bleeged tu keep my mouth shet about it, fur de Jedge paid me well tu take keer of hit, an hif I hadn't been obleeged tu tell what I knowed dis evening, nothin would hab made me gib de secret away. Well, bout a month ago hit scaped me entirely; de Jedge wus away and de ole Misses and me got two udder cullud gent'men to help hunt fur hit, and we scoured de country ober, but we couldn't find hare or hide of hit, and den de Jedge cum home and fotch his youngest darter back so sick dat we hated tu tell him, but had tu do hit, and hits my pinion dat he's gone out tu make some investurgations bout de matter dis morning; and here hit is dat de poor creeter wus in dis pond all de time."



Here Jake stopped, and the detective arose and asked permission to put a few questions to the witness. This was granted him at once.

“Jake, do you remember where this crazed creature was the night of Edgar Wilkerson’s murder?” he inquired, while every one listened with breathless interest.

“Well, let’s see if I can recollect?” said the old man, reflectively.

After a little while he continued:

“Yes, sar, I remember now; all day dat day hit wuz givin dem monstrous howls, and tinks I to myself, thars goin tu be a deth in de naborhood; and late dat evenin while I wuz cookin me and hit a little supper hit got away and I couldn’t find hit eny whare, but bout ten o’clock I herd hit givin dem terrible war hoops and found hit runnin like puttin out fire towards de house. All night long hit gib dem awful schreeches, and I lay thar wonderin who had died round de naborhood, fur true as preachin dat edotic creeter always give dem signs when enything awful wus goin tu turn up. De doctor sed dat de mother’s mind wus terribly out ob sorts before de chile wus born what caused hit tu be de awful munstrosity dat hit wus.”

“That will do, Jake; now if the court will permit I want Jake to bring all the garments in the way of outside apparel that his charge wore,” said the detective; and the coroner sent him at once on this errand.

In a little while the old man returned with a large bundle, and according to order spread the coarse woolen and cotton garbs upon the grass. And while the detective



proceeded to examine them separately, every one sat looking on, dumb with wonder and amazement, while not a sound broke the stillness that reigned supreme. At last he raised one of the checked cotton gowns from the ground containing a rent about half as large as his hand, which had been roughly patched, then he took from his pocket a small parcel, and unfolding it, fitted a piece of cloth of corresponding color and checks into the aperture.

“Gentlemen of the jury,” he said, composedly, “this piece of cloth, on which you will find blood stains upon closer examination, I found within a few feet of where Edgar Wilkerson was murdered. It had been caught on a thorn bush and torn from the garment apparently while the person wearing it was running at full speed; the case is now explained in a few words. The stiletto owned by Miss Morton had been lost, doubtless near here, this creature, whose imbecile nature has just been described by its attendant, found it, and without knowing or caring who was its victim, dealt the murderous blow.”

No one disputed the facts laid bare; and before the adjournment of the rural court on that April day it was fully agreed that the true assassin of Edgar Wilkerson was no other than the fearful mystery of Ivy Crown.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

### CONCLUSION.

“Feast, and your halls are crowded;  
Fast, and the world goes by;  
Succeed and give and it helps you live,  
But no man can help you die.  
There is room in the halls of pleasure  
For a long and a lordly train,  
But one by one we must all file on  
Through the narrow aisles of pain.”

THE soft twilight of a lovely afternoon steals through the open windows of a neat little house, situated in the distant suburbs of the Crescent City, disclosing to the eyes of the passer-by the blue silk curtains and other tasteful appointments of the interior that go to make home attractive, while without great jars of exotics bordered the veranda and bloomed luxuriantly about the tiny yard. All the comforts of the little place seemed doubly enhanced by the silence and repose that lingered over it, truly appearing the embodiment of a poet's idyl. Here, in this peaceful abode, removed from the hum-drum life of the busy city, Rosalind had found a home, but not alone, for Marietta and Peter, the faithful old servants of her late aunt, had come to her as soon as she had become settled, and were as happy as children over their good fortune. When Rosalind found herself in possession of the snug little sum of ten thousand dollars she sought out a minister who had been a friend and fellow-worker of her



father's, whom by the merest accident she had found resided in New Orleans. To him she had confided her sad story, omitting nothing that had occurred to her since her father's death, receiving in turn the warmest sympathy from himself and good wife, both of whom had advised her to take her mother's maiden name until the mystery hanging over the murder of Edgar Wilkerson was all cleared up. Hence she was known in the circle of acquaintances introduced to her by those good friends as Rosalind Wendworth. The Rev. Thomas Benson had a congregation in the city to whom he preached as often as it was possible, owing to his broad field of ministerial duties, and Rosalind had become one of the members of his congregation, also a singer in the choir. She had found her element through the most unfortunate circumstances; but, believing in the mercies of a divine providence, she accepted the cruel fate that had befallen her as having been sent upon her for her own spiritual good. Through this means she had found the work that her Master had for her to do, and became a faithful servant in His vineyard. The struggle she had experienced with poverty had taught her a grand lesson of life, and she now truly understood the trials of the poor, and knew how to sympathize with them and anticipate their wants. Hence she had joined the Ladies' Benevolent Society, and became an angel of charity in those poverty-stricken abodes, ever ready to help the sick and needy. Such had been her life since the light of good fortune illumined her way, and if she was not happy she was at least serenely content. She had always had an exceedingly clear, sweet



voice, which her father had taken great pains to cultivate, who had not only been gifted with fine oratorical proclivities, but had been a vocalist as well, and since the faith and hope of her Christian religion had re-established itself in her life, all her soul seemed to have found expression in her voice, the beauty and strength of which had become a marvel in the church of Mr. Benson. Upon this balmy April evening she was sitting alone in the twilight resting after her day's work, for since the sun rose that morning she had been busy amongst her poor. And while she sat there her thoughts involuntarily roamed back to the past. Some way throughout the whole day she had been thinking of Gerald, her lost love, and with her face turned to the window she gave herself up to those sad, sweet memories as one would raise the white drapery and gaze upon the face of their dead. During the day she had gone to the hospital with some ladies to take fruit and flowers to the patients; while there she had picked up a Kentucky newspaper and glanced hurriedly over it. The paper was three weeks old, but still was of interest to her, as she rarely had an opportunity of getting news from her old home, hence she looked at once for the society notes of the Bluegrass. And sure enough, there was a long item contained therein of the Underwoods. The party had returned from abroad earlier than they had anticipated on account of the illness of the bride's sister, Miss Millie Underwood; after this there was a brief mention made of Mrs. Porter, who was then sojourning at Frankfort, whom rumor said would in a short time become Mrs. Underwood. And while Rosalind pondered over this, she asked



herself over and over, "Would this woman make him happy?" never thinking that the notice alluded to the father instead of the son.

So engrossed had she become in ruminating over those things, she was all unconscious that the door-bell had sounded until Marietta had crossed the room and stood at her side.

"A gentleman to see you, Miss Rosalind," she said, handing her young mistress a card.

The twilight shadows had deepened, and the lamps had not been lighted, hence Rosalind could not decipher the name, but supposing it to be some one the minister had sent to see her, she kept her position, and only replied to the old servant to "show the gentleman in."

Then there came through the doorway a man's form, and tho' she was unable to distinguish his features in the dim light, as he approached her she felt that indefinable influence, that subtle warning, which visits a woman when her beloved draws near. The perceptions of the soul, swift, mysterious and unerring, had acknowledged his presence. Her physical strength seemed to desert her; her heart beat with quick and uneven throbs. She raised her eyes, and true to her intuition, there stood Gerald close beside her. It was all she could do to restrain the cry of joy that arose to her lips; but remembering that he was the affianced husband of another, she repressed the glad words and tried to greet him calmly.

At this moment Marietta lighted the hall lamp, the shaded light of which fell full upon her beautiful face and slender figure, robed in the gray dress that clung about



her in graceful folds, the white rosebuds at her throat, all making the tout ensemble exquisite in its beauty and simplicity, while the blue silk drapery of the window hangings formed the background of the loveliest picture that could be imagined. For some moments the two stood there silently regarding each other, then Gerald's voice, deep and tremulous with emotion, sounded upon the stillness:

"Rosalind, Rosalind, thank God I have found you at last!" were the words that came in thrilling tones to her ear, but she could speak no word in reply, and only looked up at him in dumb bewilderment.

"Is it possible that you have no word of greeting for me, after I have searched all this city over to find you?" he asked, sadly.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Underwood, but I cannot understand why you have searched for me?" she asked, almost incoherently.

"That I might be the first to tell you the good news; can you bear it, Rosalind? Nerve yourself, my dear girl, and hear from my own lips that the murderer of Edgar Wilkerson has been found, and all calumny has been lifted from your fair name."

A glad cry burst from her lips and her hands clasped themselves together in a silent prayer of thankfulness.

"And, Rosalind, I came also to search you out that I might ask your forgiveness for ever doubting your truth and purity. Do you think you can find it in your true heart to pardon the great wrong you have suffered at the hands of my family?"



“With you there is nothing to forgive; you have never wronged me. As to any one else, I pray that God may forgive them as I have.”

“Thank you for such noble sentiments,” he said, gravely; “and now, Rosalind, I have a story to tell you,” he continued, leading her to a seat by the window; and, while they sat in the gloaming, he told her of Millie’s sickness and death, and how she confessed to him her love for Edgar Wilkerson and her weak folly of persisting in carrying on a clandestine correspondence with him, thus implicating Rosalind, and also of Mrs. Porter’s perfidy in supposedly copying Millie’s letter in Rosalind’s handwriting; and how, from the bedside of the dying girl, he had been called to the fish pond where a second inquest was being held, which proved to be that of the mysterious creature that had haunted his ancestral home since his boyhood, the history of which he had never fully known until it was revealed by the old negro who had been its attendant. And lastly, how the shrewd detective had traced the crime to the uncanny imbecile. He related everything, and ended by describing the intense interest that had prevailed amidst the expectant group, and the shout of joy that had arisen when it was proclaimed that she (Rosalind) was guiltless. And while he spoke, Rosalind listened as one in a dream, almost doubting her senses. Then Gerald rose up and stood before her, and, in the fullness of his heart, said:

“I am not only here, Rosalind, for the purpose of telling you this, but to tell you again how I have always loved you, and ask you, in plain words, to be my wife.”



There came no response from the beautiful lips, but in the expression of supreme happiness that illumined her face, and shone from the depths of her pansy-blue eyes when she held out her hands to him, Gerald was answered—for truly “love’s words are weak, but not love’s silence.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Another year has passed, and again the beautiful spring-time is shedding warmth and brightness over the lovely old home of Ivy Crown; again it is radiant with verdure and bloom. But there has been many changes around and about the old place within the last twelve months—Judge Underwood has aged wonderfully under the blow of Millie’s death and the humiliating knowledge that the family secret he had so carefully guarded all these years had at last been brought to light; and it would be difficult to recognize, in the bowed head and silvered hair, the stately Judge of a year ago. The information imparted to him by Gerald of Millie’s love affair with Edgar Wilkerson, and Mrs. Porter’s duplicity in the matter, had also seriously affected him, and, it is needless to say, caused the engagement between he and the handsome widow to be at once cancelled. As to Mrs. Porter,—though she avoids meeting any of the Underwood family—outwardly there are no signs of remorse of conscience; she is far too much of the earth’s earthly to allow anything of a spiritual nature to trouble her life—the time has not yet come for her to think and feel.

Henry and Edwin, the two sprightly cadets, are still



rivals as regards the fair Nellie Stevenson, who is a great belle in the charmed circles.

Nettie has gone back to school to complete her studies, profiting by Millie's experience, a wiser if not happier girl.

The Bartons have taken up their abode in one of the most fashionable hotels of Lexington. Henrietta, being averse to the responsibility of a house, spends her time in receiving and paying calls, driving, theater-going, and every other way that goes to make up the life of a devotee to the useless, tiresome life of fashion. Old man Norton has again gone abroad, this time accompanied by his son, of whom he yet hopes to make a man, neither of whom ever mention the reprobate woman bearing their honored name. Fred Underwood has grown taller and handsomer since we last saw him, and there is a subdued sadness about him since Millie's death that gives him a thoughtful air and gentleness of demeanor, at once charming and sympathetic. Old lady Underwood is still the devoted grandmother, whose many deeds of loving kindness are forever being showered about her, and tho' her silver hair of a year ago is now snowy white, and her form is bent under the burden of her grief, she still fulfills her missions of charity and love. But there is another mistress who has come to reign over the grand old mansion, whose beautiful young presence sheds light and happiness around her, and whose hands are, also, ever ready to help the poor, administer to the sick, and reached out to raise the fallen and unfortunate, and this is no other than Gerald's lovely and accomplished wife—



Rosalind. She can scarcely realize, in her great happiness, that she had once gone from thence a lonely and forsaken wanderer, a supposed criminal resting under the weight of the strongest proofs of circumstantial evidence. But such was true, and she remembers, with all the warmest gratitude possible, that during this trying ordeal honest John Wilkerson had proven her benefactor, hence she never fails to extend to him and his family her kindest hospitality and most friendly interest. That her labor is reaping its reward is clearly manifested in the fact of Mrs. Wilkerson having softened down wonderfully, and, to the surprise of the neighborhood, has become a regular church-goer, and has also consented that her hitherto neglected daughters shall be sent to boarding-school. Thus it is that Rosalind still finds work in abundance in her Master's vineyard, and is never found wanting. Tho' beautiful, graceful, and sufficiently accomplished to become the reigning queen of the most elite circle of society in that aristocratic locality, she gives no thought to those things, her whole heart and soul being fully devoted to her home, Christian work, and her husband. Her divine faith has worked wonders with Gerald, who no longer bases his religion on moral philosophy or brings science to bear against things of a spiritual nature. Though science has taught him much in his past research, he has found that its principles were not of the best or the highest. And now all former illusions which had strangled his religious faith have passed away, and the immortal part of his being has been restored to its rightful sovereignty. He has found the piety, the reverence



and humble Christianity of his wife so beautiful within themselves, that he has become inspired with the same divine faith, and in the religion of Jesus Christ his spirit has found a sweet peace and rest beyond the strife, conflict and bitter lessons the world has taught him. He has found his guiding star, his angel of mercy, whose wings have sheltered him from the sin and temptation of the world, for in Rosalind's love his life has obtained the fruition of all its desires, and in the knowledge that her husband is her helper in all her good works, Rosalind is supremely content and blissfully happy; yet, in the vague melancholy that floats at times like a little cloud upon her horizon, she thinks of the darkness and gloom that once encompassed her, and of the fateful mystery that hovered over beautiful old Ivy Crown, and then her soul is lifted up in a prayer of thankfulness, for she remembers that out of the darkness and gloom of despair has come the light of divine happiness.

THE END.







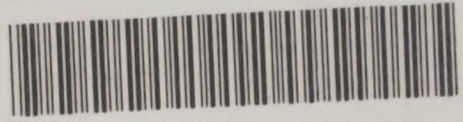








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